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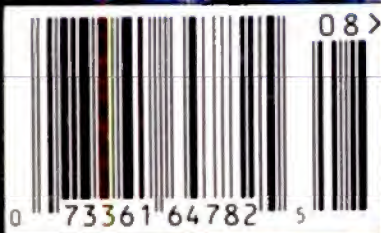
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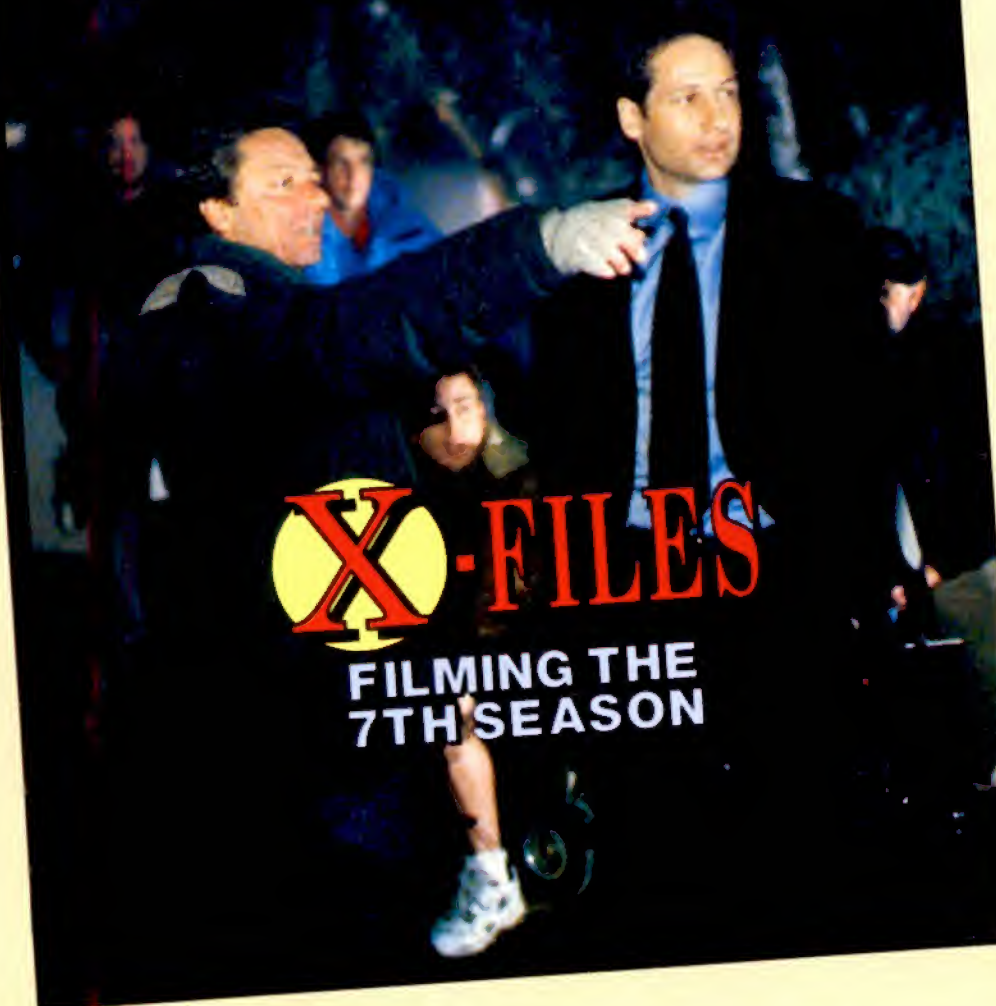
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# CINEFANTASTIQUE



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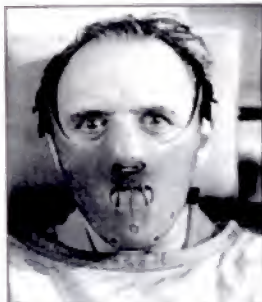
"The Magazine with a Sense of Wonder"

AUGUST 2000

Welcome to our summer movie season blockbuster preview, with a look at all the imaginative and special effects-packed science fiction, fantasy and horror film action that Hollywood can muster. Our cover and lead story is a report from the set in Toronto of the filming of Marvel's X-MEN, 20th Century-Fox's summer tentpole, opening nationwide July 14. Toronto correspondent Paul Wardle provides an interview with director Bryan Singer, who dazzled with his work on THE USUAL SUSPECTS and APT PUPIL. Singer seems sincere in being faithful to the Marvel Comics tradition in bringing their mutant superheroes to the screen. Wardle also interviews Australian discovery Hugh Jackman who plays Wolverine, perhaps the most popular of the group, as well as Oscar-winner Anna Paquin on her role as Rogue, wrestler Tyler Mane on the villainy of Sabretooth and PHANTOM MENACE's Ray Park on playing Toad. Wardle also looks at the film's comic origins and its impressive makeup effects by Toronto master Gord Smith. Whatever the results, fans are anxious to see Marvel's wondrous comic book universe get the big screen treatment it deserves, and are tired of waiting for the endlessly stalled filmic adaptations of both SPIDERMAN and THE FANTASTIC FOUR. If Fox's gamble is a hit, we'll be seeing those and many more!

Also featured in a detailed production story is a behind-the-scenes look at the making of THE ADVENTURES OF ROCKY & BULLWINKLE, which opens nationwide from Universal June 30. For those who fondly remember the wit of the '60s Jay Ward cartoon series, its surprising return as a big-budget Hollywood movie starring Robert DeNiro is a welcome treat. Joe Fordham provides a report of the filming from the set, and looks at the animation by ILM and the return of veteran cartoon voice June Foray in the role of Rocky.

And for horror fans, our preview of serial killer saga THE CELL, starring Jennifer Lopez, looks to be the auspicious feature directing debut of rock video stylist Tarsem, opening August 18.



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# WHAT LIES

## Not much, in director Robert Zemeckis' hush

By Thomas Doherty

Inspiring intense speculation on web fansites and held by Dreamworks SKG under tighter wraps than the laptops at Los Alamos, *WHAT LIES BENEATH* is the new top secret Robert Zemeckis film. In an industry where saturation advertising and sledgehammer-to-the-forehead marketing is the norm—where trailers often play like highlight reels recapping the entire film—the project has maintained a very hush-hush and on the QT profile. Tossing a crumb to the curious, Zemeckis elliptically described the film as “Hitchcock in the age of computer graphics.” The implication is that to let the cat out of the bag will not just spoil some of the fun but deep-six the whole edifice.

Fair enough: it is churlish to reveal the secrets of a supernatural thriller and thereby deny viewers the pleasures of astonishment and ambush. Everyone hates the killjoys who blab that “rosebud” is the sled or Leia is Luke’s sister, especially when they grow up to be film reviewers. On the other hand, as *THE SIXTH SENSE* proved, when audiences truly treasure a film, they can be as protective about plot twists as any studio flack. Besides, considering all the publicity—well, lack of publicity—a cynic might suspect that the folks at SKG are taking a page from the KGB playbook by ladling out tactical disinformation to misdirect the masses. In this sense, Zemeckis’ invocation of Hitchcock could be double edged. After all, the master of suspense was also the master of the red herring come-on, the con artist who filmed Vera Miles (not Janet Leigh) screaming bloody murder in the shower for the trailers to *PSYCHO*. Even the pre-release logline for *WHAT LIES BENEATH* on the Internet Movie Data Base sounds suspiciously like a plant: “A professor investigates the murder of a beautiful college student who has been appearing to his wife.”

In the spirit of clearing up the muddy

**“It will be difficult for Zemeckis to keep a plot point ahead of an audience that has graduated from an advanced course in *THE SIXTH SENSE* taught last year by M. Night Shyamalan.”**



Ford stars as an ambitious research scientist whose wife (Michelle Pfeiffer) is that creaky cliché, the psychologically fragile female suspecting foul play.

waters, while still keeping the skeleton in the sunken chest, we can reveal a few tantalizing plot details culled from the screenplay, a copy of which was obtained by a deep cover agent who later perished in a bizarre mishap on the Universal Studios tour. The script is by the actor Clark Gregg and comes billed “based on an idea by Steven Spielberg,” whatever that means (“Hey Clark, I have an idea—go write a screenplay.”) Though the printed scaffolding will be only the barest of guides for the visually oriented and FX-centric Zemeckis, the arc of the dramatic action should provide a rough outline for the final cut.

Claire (Michelle Pfeiffer) is the devoted wife of the ambitious research scientist Norman (Harrison Ford) and the doting mother of college-bound Caitlin (Katharine Towne). Years ago, Claire had given up her own promising career as a cello virtuoso for the joys of faculty wifedom and not once has she ever looked back (right). Norman, bless him, is still sweet and affectionate, but

with her beloved daughter packed off to Columbia for freshman year, and hubby working late nights at the lab cooking up the next big breakthrough in gene-spicing, Claire experiences a serious case of empty nest syndrome. The prize roses she tends in her garden don’t fill the maternal void and the spacious interiors of the family dream house seem so...empty. Not incidentally, said dream house has a convenient lakefront location, where a lighthouse sweeps beams of light through the cathedral windows for a haunting chiaroscuro effect.

One day, Claire catches a glimpse of the woman next door sobbing uncontrollably, in stark terror of her husband (James Remar). When the wife vanishes and Claire spies the husband dragging a duffel bag into the trunk of his car, she jumps to the natural REAR WINDOW conclusion. Norman listens indulgently, but really Claire, isn’t this a bit far-fetched. “Listen to me, I sound

like some middle aged Nancy Drew,” Claire admits. Claire’s self-confidence in her mental stability is not enhanced by clairvoyant flashbacks—or are they future visions?—of a mysterious blonde girl (supermodel Amber Valletta) who is either trying to communicate with her or drive her bonkers. As whispering voices waft through the house, poltergeists manipulate the antique bathtub fixtures, and the computer screen runs amuck (the Y2K touch), the full-on Amityville homeowner malady seems about to break out. Or maybe the film reference harkens back to an older model, to Hitchcock’s *REBECCA* (1940) and *SUSPICION* (1941), where the wife may be loony or the husband homicidal.

Whatever the generic ancestor, Zemeckis is working over some well-plowed territory here: psychologically fragile female suspecting foul play that may all be in her mind, evidence of which has the annoying habit of disappearing when called to the attention of another observer. The director al-



# BENEATH?

## hush summer ghost story with Harrison Ford.

so has the misfortune of releasing a suspense thriller in the wake of *THE SIXTH SENSE*, the blockbuster that not only set a new gold standard for the genre but reminded moviegoers not to take at face value the faces they see on screen. It will be difficult for Zemeckis to keep a plot point ahead of an audience that has just graduated from an advanced course taught by M. Night Shyamalan.

Moreover, though the psychic terrain of the beset housewife is familiar enough to moviegoers, it is a new field for Zemeckis. Few of his films have been located in a realistic milieu and almost all can be classified as some variant of fantasy or fable, even his early media-centric, over-the-top comedies, *I WANNA HOLD YOUR HAND* (1978) and *USED CARS* (1980). With the exception of the rollicking adventure comedy *ROMANCING THE STONE* (1984), the Zemeckis oeuvre is grounded firmly in the unreal. Appropriately, his career zoomed into hyperdrive with the time-traveling teenpic *BACK TO THE FUTURE* (1985) and its two sequels, one leaden (1989), the other soaring (1990). In between, *WHO FRAMED ROGER RABBIT?* (1988) provided a magical introduction to the brave new world of CGI, where the difference between the cartoon characters and corporeal characters all but evaporated. Already the Zemeckis touch left an imprint of fast-paced action, ironic distance, and little respect for the boundaries between media reality and reality reality.

Appropriately too, if inadvertently, Zemeckis also delivered an object lesson in the limits of CGI in the mean-spirited *DEATH BECOMES HER* (1992). Where the animated torment inflicted on the cartoons in *WHO FRAMED ROGER RABBIT?* recalled the good spirited violence of the Wyle E. Coyote tradition, the physical vengeance exacted on the real live women in *DEATH BECOMES HER* came off as ugly and misogynistic. As a pair of vain



Zemeckis, a master of fantasy and fable, turns to the more realistic milieu of the psychic terrain of a beset housewife, shrouding the project in secrecy.

harpies, Goldie Hawn and Meryl Streep are disfigured, shot full of holes, and broken into pieces. Perhaps by way of repentance, Zemeckis got as gooey as a warm box of chocolates in the certified cultural landmark *FORREST GUMP* (1994), wherein a loveable dunce melds seamlessly into newsreel and video images of the 1960s and 1970s. Perhaps the director's most extended close encounter with the planet earth occurred in his most recent feature film, *CONTACT* (1997). Light years away from the easy-going gait of *FORREST GUMP*, the all too reverent version of the Carl Sagan and Ann Druyen novel was a severe meditation on extraterrestrial communication. Carried on the shoulders of a brittle Jodi Foster, *CONTACT* showed that without a warm-blooded actor like Tom Hanks or Michael J. Fox to offset the cold technology, the Zemeckis touch can feel frigid indeed.

Like *CONTACT*, *WHAT LIES BENEATH* is emphatically female-centered

and overtly feminist: it reads like a large scale, big star version of the kind of woman-fights-back melodramas that supply the Lifetime network with the bulk of its original programming. A courageous journey to self-actualization by a spunky female is set against the self-absorption of a male who at once neglects her needs and smothers her life force. Indeed, as written, the film is all Claire's show; she is on screen for nearly every second. Here the casting of the principal parts may well dictate major changes in tone and perspective for the final screen realization. Since *GREASE 2* (1982) anyway, Michelle Pfeiffer has exuded a brainy self-confidence, a screen persona that will mitigate against any notion of Claire as a fragile, easily spooked housewife. More tellingly, the presence of Harrison Ford will almost certainly change the equation and tilt the action more towards Norman: you don't hire the \$20 million dollar man and keep him in the wings for two

thirds of the film. From this angle, the reason for the high security lock down on publicity may have less to do with an amazing plot twist than an against-type persona shift from Hollywood's favorite embodiment of decent middle class male-ness.

Even without a crib sheet, however, most spectators will not need a sixth sense to discover early on what lurks under *WHAT LIES BENEATH*. In good Hitchcockian fashion, a mysterious key figure as a crucial element in the plot—it should be labelled with a tag reading “McGuffin”—but for a real key to the mystery remember the lessons from two recent Hollywood films. *THE SIXTH SENSE* taught that ghosts hanging around the house are more likely to want to deliver a message than scare the bejesus out of the beholder. *AMERICAN BEAUTY* taught that what lies beneath the surface of nuclear family normality and suburban bliss is not-so-quiet desperation and murder close to home. Otherwise, keep your mouth shut. □



# HANNIBAL

## Ridley Scott directs sequel to **SILENCE OF THE LAMBS** for Dino DeLaurentiis.

By *Russell Lissau*

Fans of director Jonathan Demme's phenomenal 1991 thriller **THE SILENCE OF THE LAMBS** have been waiting nearly a decade for a sequel. They got their wish—at least partially—when author Thomas Harris, who penned the novels that spawned **SILENCE** and its prequel, 1986's **MANHUNTER**, delivered the succinctly named *Hannibal*, which instantly topped the best-seller charts. The one-word title revealed what the long-suffering devotees had been dying to hear, that the greatest screen villain of the past decade, Dr. Hannibal "The Cannibal" Lecter, was back. The wait for a sequel was a costly one: Harris reportedly was paid a whopping \$5 million as an advance for the book and another \$9 million for the all-important film rights.

MGM and Universal Pictures have teamed-up to back producer Dino DeLaurentiis to film **HANNIBAL**, being directed by Ridley Scott. The film brings back Oscar-winner Anthony Hopkins in the title role, really giving him a chance to expand the character he made famous. The film also stars Julianne Moore as FBI agent Clarice Starling, who stepped into the role after Jodie Foster passed on making the film after reading the script by Steven Zaillian (**SCHINDLER'S LIST**). MGM will release the film in the U.S. and Canada in 2001, while Universal will handle the film internationally.

Having eagerly devoured



Brian Cox, the first movie Lecter in DeLaurentiis' production of **MANHUNTER**. DeLaurentiis has author Thomas Harris' new Lecter sequel before the cameras.

*Hannibal* and having gone back and re-read some parts for the third, fourth and fifth times, I can say two things about the novel with perfect certainty. First, it's the most addictive book I've ever read, a tale so gripping I truly had trouble putting it down when I had to eat, go to work or sleep. And second, that I have no idea how they're ever going to turn it into a movie. *Hannibal* is so dark, so disturbing, so downright revolting at times, that only a watered-down version of the 484-page novel could ever make it past Hollywood's censors and onto mainstream movie screens. Not only that, but if for some reason a faithful adaptation of the book manages to hit theaters, word-of-mouth criticism could be so strong that the picture might die a death nearly as bad as some of the unlucky characters in the story—and

that's saying something.

With *Hannibal*, Harris has indeed developed another tale about the cannibalistic serial killer, who was brilliantly portrayed in **THE SILENCE OF THE LAMBS** by Oscar-winner Anthony Hopkins, and young FBI Agent Clarice Starling, a role that earned Jodie Foster a golden statuette as well. But *Hannibal* is far more gruesome than its predecessor, and its final treatment of Lecter and Starling is unbelievably shocking. And I don't mean shocking in any stare-at-the-bloody-car-wreck-as-you-drive-by kind of way. It's shocking like a shotgun blast in the middle of the night, shocking like a shark attack. It's surprising. It's brutal. It's terribly painful. And I can't believe that critics or audiences will ever accept it in its current form.

**THE SILENCE OF THE**

**LAMBS** wasn't the first movie to feature Hannibal Lecter. That honor goes to **MANHUNTER**, which was based on Harris' novel *Red Dragon*. Lecter grew from a background character in **MANHUNTER** to a leading player in **THE SILENCE OF THE LAMBS**, and he has an even bigger part in the new book, which shouldn't be a surprise as it bears his name.

Like Foster, director Jonathan Demme declined to return to Harris country and direct **HANNIBAL**. With Scott at the helm, just as **THE SILENCE OF THE LAMBS** hardly resembled **MANHUNTER**, which was directed by Michael Mann, **HANNIBAL** probably would only bear a faint resemblance to its predecessor. Producer Dino DeLaurentiis (**BARBARELLA**, **ASSASSINS**) paid big bucks to bring Hannibal to the silver screen. DeLaurentiis has owned the "first negotiation/last refusal" rights to all of Harris' characters, including Hannibal Lecter, since he produced **MANHUNTER**, although he passed on **THE SILENCE OF THE LAMBS**. As part of his deal to film **HANNIBAL**, it is rumored that DeLaurentiis also plans to film **RED DRAGON** back-to-back with the same cast, remaking his earlier, less successful Harris adaptation.

Harris' *Hannibal* sequel occurs seven years after the events in **THE SILENCE OF THE LAMBS**. When the story begins, Lecter is still on the loose and living the high life in Italy. Clarice Starling, on the other hand, has seen her once-promis-





**“*Hannibal* is far more gruesome than its predecessor, and its final treatment of Lecter and Starling is shocking, like a shotgun blast in the middle of the night.”**

Starling on the big screen, smiling with glee as she turns to Lecter during the horrific dinner and says, “See if I sound like *Oliver Twist* when I ask for *more*,” and then digs in for seconds? No way.

Every good story—whether it’s a movie, book, TV show or play—must have three basic parts: an introduction of the characters, a conflict and the resolution of that conflict. In almost all successful Hollywood movies,

the conflict is resolved with the hero (or heroine) coming out on top and championing over the forces of evil, in whatever form they take. It’s an age-old formula, one that Hollywood especially buys into. And put simply, movie audiences like it when the good guys win, whether the good guy in question is Luke Skywalker, Captain Kirk or Ferris Bueller. In *Hannibal*, however, the heroine loses. Big time. She loses her job. She loses her mind. She loses her moral compass and becomes a monster herself. There is no return from the dark side at the end of *Hannibal* for Clarice Starling, no last-minute rescue or sudden moment of realization that saves her from the abyss. There is only a deep descent into madness. And that’s just not the way things are done in Hollywood, at least as far as Oscar-winning actresses and multimillion-dollar film franchises are concerned.

Considering his investment, DeLaurentiis was eager to start production on HANNIBAL, which began filming in Florence in May. Shirley Delovich, head of development for DeLaurentiis’ production company noted that DeLaurentiis loved the novel and wasn’t at all scared off by the more ghastly

parts of the book. “I don’t think we’re really worried about that right now,” she said. Just the same, Delovich said it’s possible HANNIBAL could be more subtle than its print version. “No adaptation is ever word for word,” she said. “There’s always some variation on the theme.”

The only way to possibly turn *Hannibal* into a successful Hollywood film would be to scrap Harris’ ending completely and have Starling somehow come out on top. It wouldn’t be the first time this has happened in Hollywood. Plenty of novels have been drastically re-worked by screenwriters and directors, from *THE SHINING* to *CLEAR AND PRESENT DANGER*. It even happened when *Red Dragon* was turned into *MANHUNTER*. In the film, the hero (played by William Petersen) shoots and kills the murderous villain in a bloody finale. But in the book, the criminal tracks the hero to his home and badly wounds him before being gunned down by the hero’s wife. □

Steven Zaillian based his script on Harris’ best-seller, an unrelentingly grim tome that is all but unfilmable.



Anthony Hopkins as Lecter and Jody Foster as Starling in the Oscar-winning *SILENCE OF THE LAMBS*. Hopkins returns in *HANNIBAL* with Julianne Moore (r) replacing a squeamish Foster.

ing career in the FBI go down the tubes due to the constant interference of a jealous Justice Department bureaucrat, as well as various problems of her own. We also meet Mason Verger, a rich and well-connected pedophile who was one of Lecter’s earliest victims. The despicable Verger survived the attack but was crippled and horribly disfigured, and he now wants revenge on the good doctor. To do that, he uses the unwitting Starling as bait to lure Lecter into a trap that involves Italian assassins and man-eating pigs. The resulting confrontations are, to put it mildly, graphic.

But it’s not *Hannibal*’s gore that could be its undoing at the boxoffice. *THE SILENCE OF THE LAMBS* was gruesome, too, but Demme masterfully shielded the viewer from most of the carnage. Likewise, many of the more disgusting scenes in *Red Dragon* were only implied in *MANHUNTER*. Both techniques could be used to tone down *Hannibal*’s high gross-out factor. Rather, it’s *Hannibal*’s handling of Clarice Starling that may be its fatal flaw, at least as far as Hollywood is concerned.

(Warning! The rest of this article is filled with what fans of the World Wide Web call “spoilers:” information that reveals key plot details about a

movie or book. If you haven’t read *Hannibal*—perhaps you’re waiting for the movie and don’t want the cinematic surprises ruined—you might want to turn to the next article right now. If you’ve read the book, however, or are just desperate to know what happens to Starling and Lecter but haven’t yet forked over the money for your own copy, please continue reading.)

Toward the end of the book, Starling is drugged and kidnapped by Lecter, who has followed her disintegrating career since his escape. Instead of turning Starling into lunch, Lecter does something much worse. Through drugs, hypnosis and damaging psychotherapy, he actually persuades Starling to become his lover and his partner in cannibalism.

In the book’s most unnerving scene, Lecter and Starling dine on the sauteed brains of the aforementioned weaselly Justice Department bureaucrat—and while he’s still alive, no less. A few pages later, they make love. Whether you believe Starling could ever be seduced by Lecter or fall so far from grace that she would accept cannibalism is irrelevant. People can snap, especially under the influence of drugs and hypnosis. But can you possibly imagine Julianne Moore as





# THE CELL

## Music video director Tarsem enlivens the serial killer genre.

By Frederick C. Szabin

Freddie Krueger was an amateur compared to Carl Stargher, a reality-based serial killer whose very own twisted mind is the landscape that investigators must tread in order to stop him. His specially-made Cell, a Houdini-like water torture chamber in which he places his female victims to watch them drown before continuing a sadistic post mortem ritual with their bodies. The FBI finally captures him, but not before Stargher suffers a debilitating seizure that puts him in a coma, with the whereabouts of his latest victim, who only has 40 hours to live, locked in his mind.

Set for release August 11, New Line Cinema's THE CELL stars pop diva Jennifer Lopez (OUT OF SIGHT) as Catherine Deane, a child therapist with empathetic abilities, working with the FBI. Vince Vaughn (PSYCHO) plays FBI Agent Peter Novak, MEN IN BLACK's Vincent D'Onofrio plays Stargher, and Oscar nominee Marianne Jean-Baptiste (SECRETS AND LIES) plays scientist Dr. Miriam Kent.

Making his feature film directorial debut is India's Tarsem, an award-winning commercial and music video director based in London. The imaginative script is by Mark Protosevich, who has taken whacks at the oft-proposed filmings of I AM LEGEND and STRANGER IN A STRANGE LAND. THE CELL is Protosevich's first film screenplay, and



Inside the mind of a serial killer, costume design by Oscar-winner Eiko Ishioka.

came about initially in 1993 when he melded two interests into one project, that of mind-probing and serial killers. They were two subjects the life-long horror buff had no trouble delving into.

"I was obsessed with THE HORROR OF DRACULA," he admitted, "to the point where, when I was in the fourth grade I would pretend at recess that I was a vampire and I got into a lot of trouble. I used to go around and bite people on the neck at lunch. That was the first black mark on my career. The idea of horror has been an obsession of mine for a long time. And I'm very interested in psychology and dreams. As I got older I started to realize the complexities of horror movies. On the surface there's a monster and you get scared, but deep

down they're actually very complex stories, dealing with a lot of repressed fears and anxieties. Whether it's the Frankenstein monster or a serial killer, there's something about them that's terrifying because they don't fit in society.

"With THE CELL, I wanted to delve into someone's imagination, someone's mind, because I think fantasies are so much more complex and wild than our daily lives. When I wrote THE CELL, I surrounded myself with postcards or color copies of paintings by Francis Bacon or photographs. Like on this, you would have seen a lot of Francis Bacon postcards around my computer. I think visually, and Tarsem is a highly visual director. He has a similar frame of visual references which made for a very smooth collaboration."

Director Tarsem had become an apple in New Line's eye, and the company began to actively seek projects for him when THE CELL came along. Producer Eric McLeod had just come off AUSTIN POWERS: THE SPY WHO SHAGGED ME, and was brought onto the project, along with Julio Caro (SIESTA), who had worked with Tarsem at Radical Media, the production company the director had made commercials and music videos for.

"Tarsem and I had been working together for about two years and were aggressively looking for a project that would capture his sensibility and his aesthetic and make the most out



Entering a killer's twisted mindscape.

of it," said Caro, who added that the artistic possibilities of delving into the mind of a serial killer caught their attention. "It's going to be fresh, exciting, and something that will certainly be a surprise."

Noted McLeod of Tarsem, "He's done some of the most amazing commercials. He combines great storytelling and visuals and can put an interesting twist on a good story. People are going to see a psychological thriller that they really haven't seen before. A film with dynamic visuals and, most importantly, it won't be predictable."

To keep THE CELL from looking like any other nutzo supernatural serial killer tale, Tarsem surrounded himself with a list of top-notch technical artists who pushed the envelope in developing Stargher's inner mind that includes director of photography Paul Laufer, who has worked extensively with the director; production designer Tom Foden (PSYCHO); specialty costume designer Oscar winner Eiko Ishioka (BRAM STOKER'S DRACULA); and two-time Academy Award-winning makeup designer Michele Burke.

Filmed in August and September last year at the Warner-Hollywood Studios and nearby locations, the movie showcases Foden's distinctive set design. "He did an amazing job trying to show what the mind sees,"





FBI agent Vince Vaughn and psychologist Jennifer Lopez explore the darkness.

said McLeod of the British production designer. "All the sets will be augmented by visual effects, the transformations between one set and another, expanding sets to make them look larger, and utilizing visual effects to make the mechanical effects seem seamless."

Overseeing the visual effects, Kevin Tod Haug was challenged with accomplishing the subtle frissons of Tarsem's horrific iconography. There are no monstrous visual effects that are going to leap out as such. There are no monsters or things that you look at and immediately understand that they can't happen. In fact, Tarsem wanted everything to look sort of like it's theatrical, so the things that were actually done with visual effects would look like they were done practically on set. He

wanted to have that kind of strange, subjective, stagy kind of quality, like the way Fellini did it, but in a much bigger way."

From the grandiose nature of sets that represent a character's psyche, to physical representations of the character's themselves, *THE CELL* is determined to give audiences a thorough understanding of what makes its characters tick, and some of the ways it does this is through makeup and costuming, turning *THE CELL* into a near-expressionist work in the vein of *THE CABINET OF DR. CALIGARI*.

Tarsem's admiration of Eido Ishioka's costume designs brought her to the project even though she was working on Wagner's Ring Cycle opera in Europe at the time. Director and

## MARK PROTOSEVICH, SCRIPTER

**"When I was in the fourth grade I would pretend at recess that I was a vampire and I got into a lot of trouble. I used to go around and bite people on the neck at lunch."**

designer worked closely during pre-production, with the faxing of dozens of sketches back and forth to decide on final looks for Catherine and Stargher King, Carl Stargher's alter ego.

"I was immediately attracted to the Stargher King character," said Ishioka. "I wanted his appearance to be very special, unique and provocative, and Tarsem gave me creative freedom to build ideas." Those ideas were developed from Stargher's psychological profile, with influences ranging from a hummingbird motif to Samurai designs to Middle Eastern and other exotic cultures for her costumes.

Other looks for Stargher King came from makeup artist Michele Burke, who won Oscars for both *QUEST FOR FIRE* and *BRAM STOKER'S DRACULA*. "The premise, Burke said, held many opportunities for her to get creative. "It was like a makeup artist's dream," she admitted. "I find that at this point in my career, I don't want to keep repeating stuff that I've already done, and this film gave me the opportunity to create other looks and to do other things that have not been done before."

*THE CELL* gave Burke two fronts to work on, the real world, and each character's mind world. "In the real world," she said, "there's some really stark images of reality like autopsies, bleached bodies, and very strange rituals like people hanging from their skin. And then the images in the mind that were designed by Tom Foden and Eiko Ishioka were also very unusual and gave me the chance to then go further with the makeup. Every time Vincent appears he looks different. And every time Jennifer appears, in the mind worlds, she looks different. The Stargher King character Vincent plays has so many di-

mensions that his makeup is just mind-boggling at times. From the rings on his back, the stretching of the skin, his huge prosthetic front and back, contact lenses, subtle hummingbird tattoo-like appliances, his nipple rings, hairdo, body paint—it's unbelievable. At one point when he's the king he has this crown that is actually his hair."

Burke worked closely with Tarsem and associate producer Nico Soultanakis, who provided the art department with much of the research materials used to help influence the film's design. "Nico got me a whole load of diverse research," Burke continued. "From Renaissance times right through to real avant-garde, punk rock things or to an obscure artist. The design teams would have round table meetings and eventually we would come up with something and we'd all go off and do our work. It's a visual feast, and it's very exciting to work with people with such knowledge and such imagery." □

Lopez, stalked by Stargher King in his own mind after his death, seeking to save the life of his final victim.



Vincent D'Onofrio as serial killer Carl Stargher, disposing of a victim after her ordeal in "The Cell," his custom-made, Houdini-like water torture chamber.







# FILMIN

*By Paul Wardle*

Directing the \$75 million Hollywood epic the X-MEN is a task that few could handle. The comic boasts a team of superheroes, each with different powers, personalities and nationalities. Singer's suitability for the assignment stirred controversy with comic fans because of his lack of familiarity with the comic book. Singer's previous directorial credits include **THE USUAL SUSPECTS**, **APT PUPIL** and the short, **LION'S DEN**. All have won awards.

Singer is energetic and soft-spoken, with a mind that always seems elsewhere. Last February, he was about to wrap up his 91st. and final day of shooting. These final scenes were being filmed in an abandoned distillery on Toronto's western wa-

Hugh Jackman raves as Wolverine, makeup designed by Gord Smith.  
Below: Storm (Halle Berry) faces off against Sabretooth (Tyler Mane).  
Below: The comic's Storm and Rogue.





# X-MEN

## G MARVEL SUPERHEROES

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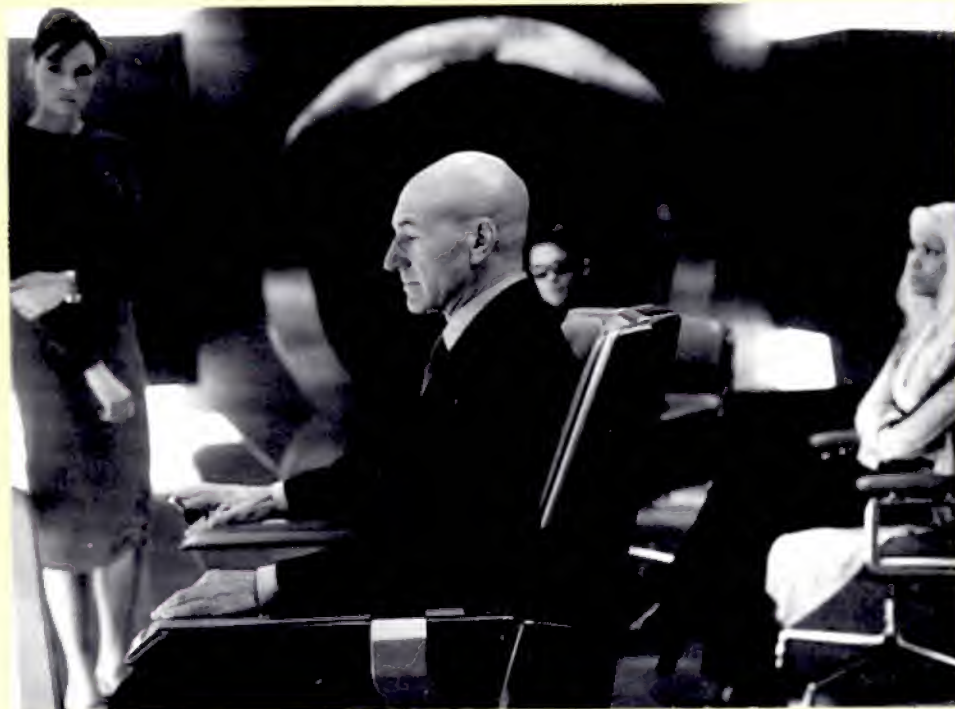
"My partners are huge [X-Men] fans," Singer began, "and I do nothing, repeat, nothing without their full support. I have the perspective of someone who's coming in fresh, just trying to make a good movie. I have objectivity, but I also have the consultation of people who are fanboys. So you can tell all the fanboys who are [writing about me on the Internet] that I'm approaching this like a fanboy. I have no choice. But very often these films based on comics get mired in the lore so much that the fans are disappointed because the story [that made the comic good] is not there, and the non-fans are not enticed into this universe, because it's not a good movie. Even if fans are unsatisfied, they shouldn't [blame] my lack of fanaticism, because that presence is definitely [on the set], in my producers and collaborators on this film."

Heading up the crack production team working on the X-MEN movie are executive producer Tom DeSanto and producer Ralph Winter. With his boyish charm, stocky but athletic build, and side-parted hair, DeSanto could pass for one of the superhero actors he works with. Winter looks older, but is no less energetic. An X-Men fan from way back, DeSanto can rhyme off trivia like the proverbial chapter and verse.

The two work closely with director Bryan Singer, as well as co-producers Lauren Shuler Donner, whose well-known husband Richard is also an executive producer.

The \$75 million budget has not been exceeded, but as Winter pointed out with a laugh, "Nobody's going to say, 'Hey! Let's go see that movie that

**"Often these films based on comics get mired in the lore so much that the fans are disappointed because the story [that made the comic good] isn't there."**



Patrick Stewart stars as the wheelchair-bound Professor Xavier, out to save mankind from a war with evil mutants. Fox opens the film nationwide July 14.

came in under budget!" Therefore, the producers have been careful to spend a large portion of the total budget (at least 15-20%) on special effects. There are 300-400 effects shots in the movie. This requires two (sometimes as many as four) separate units shooting each of the 91 days allotted.

The plot of the movie concerns Logan, primarily known as Wolverine in the comics, who stumbles upon this school for mutants, and the X-Men, mutants who are using their powers to defend mankind. "We see this strange group of mutants through his eyes," explained Singer.

It is a secret organization, an

ultra-private school run by the wheelchair-bound Professor Xavier. "They're preparing for conflict, and to prevent that conflict, so that one race of mankind doesn't wipe out the other, which is quite possible, with mutants of such power."

Singer said the central themes of his X-MEN are "prejudice, overcoming self-loathing and understanding one's place in the world. Those are universal concepts, for young people particularly."

The opposing forces in the central conflict of the movie are good mutants versus evil mutants, with Professor X on one side and Magneto, the super-villain who leads The Brotherhood

Of Evil Mutants, on the other. "One says, 'There cannot be conflict,'" noted Singer, "and the other says, 'By any means necessary.' They're two men cut from similar cloths. They are just going in different directions. Magneto's direction is wrong. He believes a war is coming and there's no necessity for that belief."

There were numerous delays in starting production, which finally began September 27, 1999. To start with, Hugh Jackman, who plays Wolverine, wasn't available until November. He was only the second choice, after another actor was bounced back and forth, and eventually bowed out due to injury and a prior commitment. Ian McKellen, who portrays Magneto, Master Of Magnetism and the X-Men's arch-nemesis, had to leave only a couple of months later to start shooting LORD OF THE RINGS in New Zealand. There were even alternate choices for which female characters to include as late as last spring.

Ralph Winter, whose lengthy list of credits include two STAR TREK movies, claimed working on those movies prepared him for the kind of fanatical response this film is likely to garner. The way to approach a film like this, he said, involves "reaching your core audience, but also reach out to new viewers. We're flying in the face of reality here. They [the actors portraying the super-powered mutants] can't all look like Schwarzenegger, so what do you do, pad everyone?"

In addition to these concerns, Winter claimed, "It's a challenge to put boundaries around their powers. Each character possesses enormous powers, but also enormous deficien-



# X-MEN

## WOLVERINE HUGH JACKMAN

*An Aussie debuts as  
Marvel's popular X-hero.*

*By Paul Wardle*

For years, fans of the *X-Men* comics have speculated as to who might play their favorite heroes if ever a movie should be released. Of all the characters those fans have wished to see depicted on the big screen, perhaps none was so eagerly anticipated as the coveted role of Wolverine. Any guesses that may have been made have no doubt turned out to be wrong. A relative unknown in Hollywood, Hugh Jackman is an Australian actor whose most important credits were in stage productions. He has won awards in both England and Australia for his roles in musicals like "Oklahoma" and "Sunset Boulevard."

Now don't go getting the wrong idea. Jackman is not some pantywaist choirboy. Watching scenes where he fights larger men, threatening to slash a thug's face with his adamantium claws, it is evident that in the course of over 91 days of filming that have taken place since shooting of THE X-MEN started

in September, 1999, Jackman has become the living embodiment of Wolverine. The character is one of Marvel's most violent, and yet a strangely complex personality with a background shrouded in mystery. Logan is a mutant who possesses a hatred for practically everyone and everything, and the metal claws that burst through sheaths in his wrist, can cut almost any substance to ribbons.

"At times it's a little daunting," said Jackman when asked how it feels to play such a character. "I was at lunch today with a guy who'd been reading [*X-Men* comics] for years. His dog is named Logan! Another guy in a health food store told me he has friends with Wolverine tatoos! If these people don't like my performance, they're going to come after me!"

Since in the comics Wolverine is Canadian, Jackman noted Canadian fans are adamant that he must be played as a Canadian. This is especially obvious to Jackman, who has been shooting in the cities of Toronto, Hamil-

Jackman springs into action as Wolverine, holding adversaries at bay with metal claws that burst through sheaths in his wrists, makeup by Gord Smith.



Director Bryan Singer sets-up a shot in the lair of Magneto, who leads the Brotherhood of Evil Mutants.

cies. Each character has a struggle to deal with. Professor Xavier has vast mental powers, yet he's crippled. Cyclops has these incredible eye beams, yet he can't take off his glasses [for fear of hurting innocent people]. Jimmy [James Marsden, who plays Cyclops in the movie] has lost one of the greatest tools an actor has...his eyes. He has to play every scene behind a visor, or glasses."

Singer chose beautiful Dutch actress Famke Janssen to play Jean Grey, the redheaded telekinetic who's romantically attached to group leader Scott Summers. Grey, known in the comics as Marvel Girl and then as Phoenix; and Summers, (also known as Cyclops) are the Professor's chief assistants in readying the newer mutants for battle. "I wanted to go with a mature Jean Grey," Singer explained, "because I was playing Rogue very young. I wanted to take some of the attributes of Kitty Pryde, Jubilee and Rogue and sort of merge them into a young Rogue. So then I needed someone who's more of a woman to balance out Rogue. In casting a younger Cyclops and an older Wolverine, there's an imbalance that can occur. It's part of that weird thing about casting an ensemble and trying to keep it interesting."

The audience's entry into the storyline, particularly for viewers unfamiliar with the comic

book series, centers around the characters of Logan [Wolverine] and Rogue. According to Singer, "It takes the essence of that lost feeling of waking up one morning and realizing you're different from everyone else. It takes two characters who deal with that, both in similar and different ways, and brings them together. Here I think we have a superhero comic movie that women can appreciate every bit as much as men."

Singer described Wolverine as "a book that thinks he's closed, and a person looking for answers to a past that has been erased from his mind." Despite the violent nature of Wolverine's psyche, actor Hugh Jackman has brought to the character, in Singer's words, "a kind of sweetness. He's played all kinds of characters. He brought dimension to the character, and the physical qualities to do actions quickly."

Wolverine is among the most popular of the X-Men characters among comic book fans. Why does Jackman think this character has sustained such great popularity over the years? "He's got a sense of humor," the actor replied. "He's funny, and unpredictable, and very tough, but in a believable way. And he's flawed. I'm sure he would do things differently if he thought them through, but he doesn't. All young boys want to be like Wolverine, because he's not bound by anything. He doesn't care what anyone thinks about him. He lives his life exactly as he wants to, and he says and does what he wants. It would be pretty free being Wolverine in real life."

To research the workings of special effects for this project, Singer was allowed to hang around George Lucas during the making of STAR WARS: THE PHANTOM MENACE. "I also visited James Cameron on TITANIC, and was able to preview all the effects on that picture," he said. "I have a great visual effects supervisor, Mike Fink, who I trust a lot. It's just a tool, like cinematography, like any of the other things you have to learn when you make your first feature."

The casting of Patrick Stewart as Professor Xavier is one of the few choices that fans can't







Jackman as Logan, a reluctant superhero consumed by hatred for both his fellow mutants and mankind, selecting a uniform at X-Men headquarters.

**“It’s a fine line we walk between making this movie real and still maintaining the essence of the story,” said actor Hugh Jackman, “without it being two-dimensional.”**

ton, and the town of Oshawa; his first trip to Canada. “No, no, no. [the guy said] If you don’t play him Canadian, you’re in trouble!” So of course on the set, there’s a hockey stick hanging there and I had to ask for a case of ‘ExI [Molson Export Beer].”

One expression that Canadians do not use, but is a staple of Wolverine’s dialogue in the comics is the word “Bub,” which he uses to refer to just about anybody. For the fans who have just got to know, Jackman does throw in a couple of “Bubs” here and there. “Twice so far. It hasn’t actually been in the script, but I’ve just slipped it in a couple of times. Hopefully it will make it into the movie.

“It’s a fine line we walk between making this movie real and still maintaining the essence of the story,” Jackman continued, “without it being two-dimensional in any way. My hair, for example. We had to work on that for a long time, because all the fans have got to be able to say from the first moment, ‘That’s Wolverine!’ but by the same token, he’s got to be able to have a drink in a bar without anybody thinking, ‘Who’s this freak?’ The more I find out about [Wolverine], the more of a responsibility and an honor it is, because this character, in people’s imaginations, is larger than life.”

Wolverine doesn’t require

the amount of body makeup or prosthetics that is necessary for other mutant characters in the film, but the claws have to be attached to his wrist. They have to move with agility, and look like they are actually a part of his arms. They are also extremely sharp and dangerous. They are, after all, a weapon. How did Jackman adjust to these new appendages?

“I’ve got a nice scar just here on my leg, actually,” Jackman revealed while pointing out the portion of his knee to which he referred. “The X-Men uniforms that we wear have padding built into them around the knee. Thank goodness, because we have to jump around on them. It’s high density rubber, which is one centimeter thick. I was [shooting] the fight with Sabertooth, and I punctured straight through [the padding to my knee]. I don’t even know how I did it. I remember thinking it was sore, but at the end of the day, I took off the suit, and there was a huge red patch. I had punctured straight through the skin. The first claws I had were razor sharp, and I said, ‘This is ridiculous. I could kill somebody.’ Having done stage fighting, getting used to that extra nine inches [in front of your fist] is the hardest part, because you keep wanting to get in close to the [person you are fighting],

but you don’t have to.”

Of course Jackman is not doing all the stunts himself, but the major portion of the fight scenes are in close-ups and medium shots, and much of that is Jackman. “We had three straight weeks of work with the stunt guys,” said Jackman. “I had to kind of [learn] the fighting style of Wolverine, and how he uses those claws, because he’s the best at what he does. He can’t look like an amateur.”

Jackman is no stranger to fight scenes from his work in the theatre, and in independent films in his native land. “I had four years of training as an actor. I have never trained fully in martial arts, but done enough to adapt. Specifically I trained for this. Wolverine’s a street fighter. He’s quick; he’s smart; but it’s not pretty. There isn’t *anything* pretty about what he does, and it’s unpredictable. He’s not in there to spar with you. If he can slash your head off in one [motion], that’s what he’ll do, because he doesn’t want to stick around.”

Like many involved in this production, Jackman was not an X-Men fan when he took on this role. “Bryan [Singer] didn’t want me to read any [X-Men comic books]!” he revealed. “But I’ve read quite a lot. [The comics] have been a great influence on me in getting how he is; how he draws his claws, and the history.

Of the climactic fight with Sabertooth, the huge animalistic villain played by Tyler Mane, Jackman was unimintimidated, despite the fact that Mane is an ex-wrestler, and weighs 270 pounds. “I never worried about it. It was only later that I realized I could have easily poked him in the eye [with the claws], but at the time, it was great fun. At one point, we were going so hard, I started getting this huge headache, and before you know it, I had heat exhaustion. You’d think a guy from Australia would be [unsusceptible] to

that, but I was in the trailer vomiting. It’s so hot in those suits.”

Not only is it hot, but sometimes painful as well, as Jackman explained, “There was one point when we were shooting a scene where I was falling down, and stuck my claws in the side of a building to [break my fall], and I’m hundreds of feet in the air. I was dropped with my full weight and I had a harness on at the time that was around my groin, and somehow in mid-flight, my balls got entangled. I still wince thinking about it.”

At the time, Jackman screamed a four-letter word, and called for someone to get him out of there. “But that was just as painful. They’re yanking me up, basically by my balls. As I got out, I couldn’t help crying. That was definitely the last take of that day. The director was asking the cameramen if they got it [on film], because he knew he got a realistic reaction shot, and also he knew I wouldn’t be shooting anymore.”

Moving in Wolverine’s costume was also not easy at first,

The comic’s Wolverine, teamed with Cyclops. Jackman read the comics to add nuance to his performance.





said Jackman. “[Wolverine] is a reluctant member of the group and [therefore] a reluctant uniform wearer. So he gets a uniform which is not his. It wasn’t made for him. So we made out that it was very tight on him. In fact all the costumes are very tight. They wanted them to look sleek. These things are very expensive, and made of leather, and it was very difficult to move. I couldn’t bend down at first. We did one scene where I was dropping onto the floor, and when I landed, the seat of my pants went [makes ripping sound]. After that, it was perfect,” he joked.

“We’d just try to work [the costumes] in: wear them in the trailer; try to eat lunch in them; by now they feel like a second skin.”

Unlike other members of the X-Men, Wolverine is not keen to join at all, preferring instead to stay on his own. He would have nothing to do with both mutants and humans, if he had his way, with only a few exceptions. As Jackman explained it, “At the end of the movie, he’s a reluctant member, but still very distant. One of the key relationships that’s being explored in this movie is the Rogue-Logan relationship. After a while, without expecting to, or wanting to, he begins to care about this little girl, and she looks up to him for that protection in this world. Not only in the outside world, but also in the world of mutants. Even in Professor Xavier’s presence, she still looks up to [Logan]. I understand that in the comic book, there was only one issue where you saw her as a teenager. This movie is exploring, particularly with Rogue, that point at which a mutant discovers that they are different, and how they cope with it.”

According to Jackman, Logan gravitates towards Rogue, because he senses a kindred spirit in her isolation. “Logan represents, for the audience, that person who is skeptical of everything; the uniforms, the names that everybody [is given], and what they stand for. He kind of sits in the middle of the Xavier and Magneto camps. Through him, the audience can come into this world.

“The X-Men represent tolerance,” Jackman continued. “You’ve got The Brotherhood

**“As an actor [Patrick Stewart] is consummate,” said Jackman. “When he walks onto the set there’s a different atmosphere. His passion is never-ending.”**



Jackman as Wolverine faces-off against Ian McKellan as Magneto on a speeding train, refusing to join in the mutant supervillain’s war on mankind.



Of Evil Mutants, The X-Men, and then you’ve got Senator Kelly, who represents a part of mankind that doesn’t understand these other two camps. Logan is not a part of any of those. He’s a mutant and he knows that, but he’s not necessarily flaunting it. When you discover Logan, he would be very happy going through life without anybody knowing who he was. This is the point in his life where we find him, so it’s a good journey for him as well. 15 years ago, he was experimented on, and he doesn’t know anything about his past and isn’t happy with what’s happened to

him. He hasn’t worked out exactly how he feels about [being a mutant]. Now we can explore where all Logan’s anger comes from. No one is just angry. The movie’s trying to establish a believable background to all the characters. People who are going to see this movie who don’t know anything about X-Men. They have to be brought into it, to understand what a mutant is. The audience will work that out for themselves. It’s not spelled out.”

When Jackman first sent in an audition tape, he was one of thousands that director Bryan Singer considered for the role.

He was called back in 1998, but was embroiled in another commitment. They wanted Jackman to do a screen test for Singer in Los Angeles, but in the meantime, another actor who was originally chosen, became unavailable. Then the actor was back again, and Jackman finished his play, and went back to Australia. He was about to start another film there, when he got the call to play Wolverine.

“I started filming a month into the shoot [in 1999], so for them it was a pretty scary time, because it was a leading role, and they still hadn’t cast it. My final audition was in a set that serves as the Senate room, where they’re going to discuss the Mutant Registration Act.”

Besides Rogue, another of the important relationships Logan makes during the course of the film is between him and Professor Charles Xavier, mentor and benefactor of the X-Men. As Hugh Jackman explained it, this is a relationship of equals. “Logan is the least reverential person around [Professor X]. There’s one scene where I call him ‘Chuck.’ No one else has even called him Charles. Logan deliberately makes jokes about him, but there’s an underlying respect he has for him. Certainly, by the end of this movie, once he understands what Professor X is about, he becomes very loyal and respectful. He would probably do anything for the professor. To win Logan’s respect is difficult and Professor X wins it by the end of the movie. He understands that the professor is genuine and sometimes will say, ‘I don’t know.’ Logan finds that refreshing. They also realize that they need each other, and that Professor X offers to help Logan with some of these questions about his past.”

Working with Patrick Stewart, who stars as Xavier, was wonderful, said Jackman. “As an actor, he’s consummate. When he walks onto the set, there’s a different atmosphere. His passion for the piece is never-ending. He’s a very giving actor. He will discuss and question the script a lot. He’s got a sense of quiet authority about him. He commands attention as a person, and it’s magnified as an actor.” □



really argue about. "A bald man who looks good sitting in a chair, giving orders?" Singer laughed. Of working with the veteran actor, Singer noted, "Charming to work with. He's a really fine actor, so that makes my job a lot easier. But trying to take you away from thinking about Captain Picard is the first order of business. A lot of detail: speech, wardrobe, attitude; all these things had to be discussed early on with Patrick, to find a way to shake that. There's also some good to bring out of that. In any other film, he's a wonderful, bald actor. In a genre picture, he's a superstar... in my opinion."

In contrasting Xavier from Picard, Singer said, "I think Picard is more of a soldier, and, as much as he loves his crew, they are still the crew. The X-Men are more like a family. Xavier is more responsible for them. He is more like their teacher. STAR TREK is a government exploration team. Here, they are more like outcasts. They're running a more private, intimate operation. And unlike Picard who is already the captain of a ship when we meet him, here we see the very beginning stages of Xavier building the school and bringing these people together."

Singer also alluded to the fact that other characters and concepts that have not yet been used may find their way into future sequels, if any. Specifically, he referred to The Danger Room, a mechanized enclosure designed to keep the X-Men on their toes with a constant bar-



The X-Men spring into action (l to r), Famke Janssen as Jean Grey, Halle Berry as Storm and James Marsden as Cyclops. Right: Magneto, their comic book adversary.

rage of weaponry to dodge. He also would have liked to use The Beast, one of the original X-Men, who, along with Cyclops and Marvel Girl, was created in 1963. Gambit and Nightcrawler are other characters that may make their way into a sequel, and many different villains from the comics will be considered.

For the last three years, Singer, who had never read the X-Men comics before, has been catching up on what he missed, consulting fans on the crew as well as learning the history of the group. Certain characters have become composites, most notably Rogue. "She's not the Rogue most of you know," said Singer. "She's young, innocent, with almost no life experience. She's run away and she just discovers all this through very innocent eyes. She is kind of a

merger of these younger X-characters and I used her as a vessel, because I found her mutation so vital to telling the story and so extraordinary. It's so indicative of the curse of being a mutant. To have this amazing power, but at the same time, the inability to touch or be touched."

Singer rejected the first two scripts he was shown, before settling on the present adaptation. "They didn't have a soul," he said of the early drafts. "This is a more retro-comedy/drama. I deal more with the origins. I wanted to develop it more."

The difficulty in making something like this come to life is multiplied by its ensemble nature. Instead of dealing with one person's powers/problems/conflict, you have five or six X-Men to deal with at a time. "When I meet [X-MEN comic] fans and hear the questions they ask me, [with some of them, their] perspective is so narrow, so specific. It's tens of thousands of pieces of material over nearly four decades. You have to get to what is at the heart of The X-Men. I owe it to fans of this series to make a serious film. Sure, there's humor and action and fun, but ultimately, I take it very seriously. We're trying to make this kind of movie for \$75 million. Very difficult!"

So what things did he have to cut out to get the film in under budget? "You want to do them initially, and all of a sudden, as you're making your



movie, you realize that you don't need them. Things like The Danger Room. I could've had a Danger Room, and then that sequence would've taken a certain amount of time and money from other sequences that I like better. That's an example of something we toyed with early on, and when we looked at the price tag, in the end I didn't think it was necessary. In TITANIC, there were many sequences filmed, that ultimately were cut. I'm not in a position to cut sequences. I shoot the sequences I'm going to put on film. Some things get cut, but not a lot."

According to Singer, the reason for Fox capping the budget at \$75 million was due to there being "No major stars, and you factor in the amount of money that you're going to be spending on the campaign, which, with all these kinds of movies is significant. I haven't compromised

The film's stunt-filled action climax: Jackman as Wolverine fights Sabretooth (wrestler Tyler Mane), atop New York's Statue of Liberty.





# X-MEN

## GORD SMITH MAKEUP EFFECTS

*The Canadian effects ace on realizing comic book design and fantasy action.*

anything. I made my film.”

To make characters like this real for the viewers is difficult, noted Singer. But he approaches the problem with this in mind: “The great thing about the X-Men is, as larger-than-life as they seem, with all these physical attributes, at the core, the essence of their characters is very specific. They’re still human beings. The story takes place in Washington and parts of Canada, places that are real.”

Besides the settings, other things about the storyline will, Singer claimed, be easily identifiable to first-time viewers. “I think every young person goes through a stage in life,” Singer said, “when they feel ostracized.”

Singer had his own ideas about the redesigning of the X-Men costumes. Though he is duty-bound not to describe them in detail, he did note, “I wanted something that merged original designs with something more sexy, yet that would be practical.” The uniforms are made from a variety of materials, including leather.

In the film, political forces within the U.S. government want to wipe out mutants, or at least incarcerate them. “Some right-wing Senators have certain opinions about it,” said Singer. “Other people are letting it go. It’s where we would be on any issue. Magneto is

The fate of humanity hangs in the balance as Sabretooth and Mystique enter the sanctum of the X-Men.

*By Paul Wardle*

On a lonely, industrial service road that runs behind The Kodak Building in a north-western district of Toronto, lies an unimpressive office. At the front of the low-rise industrial structure are two black doors. The only marking on the building is a small plaque between the doors that reads FXSMITH. The interior is surprisingly clean and stylish, and reflective of the man who toils here: special effects maverick Gord Smith. Smith’s experiments with translucent silicone for skin tissue have set a new standard for film realism.

A quiet, retiring man, the grey-bearded Smith carries himself with a foppish dignity that recalls Charles Laughton in *THE ISLAND OF LOST SOULS*. When Smith exhibits his toothy grin, he could easily pass for a mad scientist in an old B-movie. The X-MEN movie required Smith to design The Toad’s darting tongue, Wolverine’s adamantium claws and Mystique’s unique body paint and scaly body. “In a very general sense I’ve been responsible for the looks of all the characters,” said Smith. “I’ve been supervising the special makeup effects, hair and wigs.”

Four different sets of claws for the character of Wolverine had to be built and grafted on to the arms of Hugh Jackman and various stuntmen. “The claws were dealt within a number of different ways,” he said. “All four of the Logans [the given name of Wolverine’s character]



Smith, the Toronto makeup specialist who switched from acting to effects work to cure himself of a childhood phobia of blood.

have individual, custom-made claws that they wear. They just kind of hold on to them in the palms of their hands and squeeze their fist. They’re custom formed to fit over their knuckles so that it looks like the claws are coming out of their hand. That way it’s safe. They can put them down rather than walk around with a set of ginsu kitchen knives all the time they’re on set.”

In the comic books, Wolverine’s claws are retractable, though they emerge from sheathes in his wrist rather than between his fingers like those of a cat. How was Smith able to make this look believable? “I have mechanical arms that were made with blades shooting out and retracting, Smith explained. “Also, a lot of the stuff that’s in action is being done with CG [computer animation]. If it’s a wide shot and we see the full

figure, with the blades retracting and shooting out, those are done with CG. Any time it’s a close-up to establish detail, it’s live.”

What character’s makeup provided the biggest challenge? “The major character for me has been Mystique,” he said. Played in the film by the gorgeous Rebecca Romijn-Stamos, Mystique can metamorphosize into any shape, and normally had dark blue skin, with scaly growths on her back and legs. Her costume is the most nude of all the female characters and this means tons of body makeup which took eight women to apply. “She wears about 75 prosthetics that are of a new technology that we’ve developed where, in this particular case, we can reuse the prosthetics. We don’t glue the prosthetics down except on the very edges, the rest of it is self-sticking. It’s reasonably comfortable for the actress. We don’t have to cover her in glue. Most of her body is covered in scales, and then the rest of her body we spray blue.”

The prosthetics used in the movie for skin contact are primarily made from a process which Smith developed himself, and which other makeup artists have been trying to accomplish for over 40 years. The innovations Smith has created have made him one of the most sought after of movie makeup men. Silicone is used in connection with, or instead of, latex, and the pliability of the substance creates a translucent quality that makes it more moveable and realistic looking





Rebecca Romijn-Stamos as Mystique, body paint and 75 prosthetic pieces applied by a team of eight women. Right: One of Magneto's aquatic henchmen.

than was ever possible with previous time honored methods.

Despite the fact that Smith has been conducting his research and development for the past seven years, he claims the silicone prosthetics used in X-MEN have taken the science-fiction of fake skin to even more amazing levels. The reusable, self-sticking prosthetics are also used on the character of Sabertooth. "We don't need to really make them up, except to shift color. When he gets excited, we add red, for instance.

One of the crosses actors have to bear is the removal of makeup. Fake beards, hair or prosthetics were glued on with spirit gum in the past. Boris Karloff screamed obscenities in the 1930's when the eyelids he wore as the Frankenstein Monster were ripped off at the end of a shooting day.

"We haven't had to have a dermatologist on the set yet," Smith reported proudly. "We've been shooting for a very long time, and they have to wear the prosthetic for many hours every day. It's not painful at all in this particular case, except for Mystique, and that's mostly because of the paint. We have to paint her entire body; her face, in her ears, up her nose, around her eyes, and we use a water-proof

paint so that sweat doesn't affect it in any way.

"In order for the paint to be waterproof," Smith continued, "it has to be suspended in an alcohol base, and you just spray her in a well-ventilated room and mask her. Once it's on, it's quite permanent. Taking it off is a little labor intensive, but it comes off with adhesive removers and creams and things."

Originally, X-MEN was to have been completed in 91 days, but Smith said it would continue until March in Toronto, and then resume in California. "It changes hourly," remarked Smith. "We're making stuff up as we go along, but I'm prepared, because it was obvious at the beginning of the picture that it was going to go that way."

A tight-fitting glove gives the impression that Wolverine's claws are of his hands, but the claws are still dangerous, and if not for the skill of Hugh Jackman's fighting, serious injuries could easily occur. Padding between the blades and his hand is some protection for Jackman, but he still has to be ultra-careful. "Anything banging into the end of those claws levers them into the top of his hand," said Smith. "We have real blades for

**"Phobias are a dangerous thing if they get out of hand," said Smith. So I either had to put myself in the hospital...or do it myself, and get paid for it."**

punching through walls, plastic extruded blades for general usage, and rubber blades for getting close in stuntwork."

Far from being problematic to translate comic book fiction into realistic designs, Smith reported, "I think it's the easiest gig I've ever had in my life." The fantastic elements of the story were a refreshing change after the high-realism effects he is usually called upon to do. "Within the fantasy world, you end up with a fair bit of dramatic license. You

which creates a separation between the lens and her pupil and iris. I won't allow her to wear lenses more than four hours a day."

Black binders full of color and black-and-white photos of Smith's work are on display in his office, where two antique roll-top desks still function as intended. The gore and makeup effects seen in the photos make one wonder what kind of background or education prepares a man for this type of career. The answer is never what you expect.

"I've been in the theatre all my life. I'm a classically trained actor. I've had three theatres of my own," he said, and then revealed the main reason for his sudden change in careers. "I had a really bad blood phobia and decided to deal with it. A chance allowed me the opportunity to get into the film industry and deal



with it [that way]."

get to push the envelope a little farther." A lot of the work involves eyes. Smith supervises the application of special lenses for Toad, Sabertooth and other characters. "Toad is a dirty, grainy yellow, with green hair and toad-like eyes. We built some animal-like lenses for Toad, Mystique and Sabertooth. They all wear large contact lenses and I have doctors on the set all the time. It's very specialized. I personally stay out of it, except from a design perspective. Everyone's eyes are different. Rebecca Romijn-Stamos' eyes are very dry. It's a symptom that's well known in the optometrist's field. Someone like that would generally be told not to wear contacts because the surface of their eye could literally flake off with any kind of abrasion. She wears bandage lenses underneath the scleral lenses

His crippling fear of blood surfaced in his childhood due to his father's death from leukemia. He underwent therapy, but nothing worked until he turned to the business of manufacturing fake blood and gore for the movies. Once he had achieved notoriety for his work, he was unexpectedly asked to appear on a talk show segment tackling the subject of phobias. He agreed to be on the show and revealed his own affliction, which prompted the interviewer to ignite Smith's fears, hoping to make him pass out on camera.

"Phobias are a dangerous thing if they get out of hand," said Smith. "So I either had to put myself in the hospital with a bunch of fucking assholes who charged an awful lot of money and didn't know what they were doing, or do it myself...and get paid to do it," he chuckled. □



# X-MEN

## ROGUE ANNA PAQUIN

*The Oscar-winner on playing a teen superhero.*

By Paul Wardle

Anyone who remembers Anna Paquin's breathless acceptance speech at the 1994 Oscars when she won for best supporting actress in *THE PIANO*, will have no problem believing she is shy. Unbelievably cute and sensitive, Paquin is noticeably nervous during interviews. Perhaps the fact that she was surrounded by a table full of male journalists when I interviewed her at a press junket in Toronto, has something to do with it.

Paquin plays Rogue, who, for much of the film, wears a hooded cloak, symbolic of Rogue's withdrawal from human society. The petite girl

Younger than the Rogue of the comics, the 18-year-old Paquin wears a hood to symbolize her isolation.



manages to convey vulnerability as well as power in this complex role. Giggled Paquin, as she uncomfortably began the interview, "When we meet Rogue in the movie, she has recently discovered her powers, and is still quite overwhelmed by her abilities, and what that means for her in terms of being able to have a normal life. She has been quite lonely, because it's very new for her. At some stage in all people's lives, they've felt like they are different; that they don't fit in."

Just barely 18, Paquin's first introduction to Rogue came from watching the *X-MEN* cartoon when she was a child. "I thought it was really cool when I got to play her," she said.

When we first encounter the character, she meets up with Wolverine in a small-town bar, perhaps somewhere in Alberta. "Wolverine is one of the first other mutants she's come across," said Paquin, "so obviously she feels a connection to him, because he's going through similar things to what she's going through, even though he's a lot older than she is. They have something very significant in common. The nature of her mutation is incredibly different [from] his, which is almost beneficial to him. He can feel, he has the claws, whereas she can't touch anyone ever. That's an incredibly isolating thing."

Rogue's power enables her to suck the life force or abilities from any being, even taking on their memories and secrets. She is incapable of having a normal relationship for fear of killing a



Paquin as Rogue, a mutant whose touch saps the life force or ability of anyone she contacts, unphased by the finger-knives of Wolverine (Hugh Jackman).

potential lover. "I try as much as I can to feel what it would be like to be any character I play," said Paquin when I asked her if she was able to feel Rogue's isolation while playing her. "I try to imagine what it would be like to not have any physical contact ever. Not by accident, not just brushing against someone. She has to be very careful not to be careless that way. That would be incredibly difficult."

"It seems, from reading the comics," she continued, "that it's quite normal for people to get freaked out when they meet a mutant. It seems to Rogue that the best thing to do is to run away. If she's not near anyone she loves or cares about, then she can't hurt them. In the comic book, I believe that the young gentleman who discovers with her that she's a mutant, goes into a coma for quite some time."

There is a scene where the young debutant, who lives with her parents, undergoes her stunning transformation, not just into womanhood like most young girls, but into mutanthood. The character is very complex, according to Paquin. "I think she's very strong, because she's had to survive being a young girl by herself. It's not exactly the safest thing to be a young person on your own, but she knows how to protect herself, and is also very unselfish to make sure she doesn't hurt anyone. She takes precautions."

Among the precautions she takes are the wearing of gloves. "Wearing gloves for five

months isn't all that much fun," she said, "but it's winter, so..."

Paquin praised Bryan Singer, the director of *X-MEN* as being wonderfully creative. All the directors she's worked with are different, she added. "You can't even compare them, because they all have their own processes and different ways of attacking a film."

I asked Paquin if she takes a naturalistic approach to her acting, and she revealed that she had never taken acting classes. "I don't do parts where I can't find something that I understand about the character. I want to make the character realistic enough that the audience will be able to relate to her. I try to be that character. I will try to react like that character."

The amount of powers or abilities Rogue can absorb depends on the amount of time she spends with the person, the duration of the touching. The powers she takes on will eventually fade, and their memories will be lost. "She will feel connected to that person, which I think would be an incredibly confusing thing, to suddenly feel an intense bond with someone you have never met. I think there's one moment in the film where I don't know whether it will translate at all, where she has an understanding of a character that she would not have had anything in common with or understood in the slightest. I think that's kind of a scary thing."

Once again she laughed at



her vagueness, but cried, "I don't want to ruin the whole movie!" The questions turn more nonspecific as Paquin is asked whose abilities she would like to absorb if she had those powers in real life. "I think it would be great to play the guitar like Jimi Hendrix for a day. That would be fun."

Unlike Wolverine, there is no climactic battle between Rogue and a villain among The Brotherhood Of Evil Mutants. Still, the role is physically demanding, as Paquin explained: "A lot of times you're pretending that physical things are happening to you and they're not. Pretending you're absorbing powers, when I have no idea what that would physically feel like, is strange. Thankfully, in the moment, it just happens. I imagined that it would feel like a surge of power, and what that person is thinking and feeling; suddenly getting all that information. It's physically draining at the same time as it is [surging]."

In the movie, the character of Rogue is portrayed as a composite of three different female characters that have appeared in various X-MEN comic titles. She is a much younger character than she has become by the time she has developed to the point at which she is seen in comics. "She's not Rogue right now as the comic books portray her," explained Paquin.

"Rogue's been around for years and years. I hope I don't disappoint people too much. I've read lots and lots of comic books to get her.

"I think she's a little skeptical," Paquin supposed of her character's place within the X-Men team. "She's looking for a place where she can fit in, and she finds all these people who are like her and understand what she's going through. I think that's kind of hard for her to believe; that these people were there all along and all of them have had experiences somewhat similar to hers. It takes her a little while to adjust to being around people who don't think she's a freak. She has to cover herself up and wear gloves, but everyone has their thing that makes them different, and she doesn't get ostracized for that in this community." □

**“Put it this way,” said DeSanto, “the fans that know this storyline are happy. It’s centered around what I feel is the crux of the mythology: Xavier & Magneto.”**



**Stylish villainy: Ian McKellan as Magneto, leader of the Brotherhood of Evil Mutants, pursuing a war with humankind that he sees as a battle for survival.**

right. There is prejudice and hatred against his kind. It could eventually result in the destruction of and experimentation on his people. He's not a thug trying to steal money, or seek revenge against a company that he wants to blow up for firing him 30 years ago. He has a belief that is true, but his way of dealing with it is what is wrong."

Asked about his casting of Rebecca Romijn-Stamos as Raven Darkholme, Singer replied that while playing the villainous villainess Mystique seems against her nature, "Ian isn't exactly a Nazi either." Singer referred to Ian McKellan, who, though he plays super-villain Magneto in this film, has also worked with Singer before on APT PUPIL where he portrayed a Nazi war criminal pursued by a teenage boy. There are even concentration camp sequences in X-MEN, but the production wishes to keep their nature and significance under wraps.

Shooting was conceptualized early February of 2000, and postproduction reportedly will be done in 18 weeks instead of the usual 26. The film score, by

Michael Kamen, will be ready by May 22, and the movie will be in theatres July 14. "Unlike Spielberg and Lucas who have everything worked out years in advance," said Winter, the concepts and designs used in X-MEN, for sets, costumes, prosthetics and such, were completed by April 1999, with effects shots began in September. Ninety-one days to shoot a movie like this is not as long as it may sound. Quickly it became apparent that costumes and hair would have to adjust for the conditions. One of the X-Men, a goddess of the elements from Kenya, called, appropriately enough, Storm, posed a problem.

"Is her hair and cape affected by the weather?" Winter asked rhetorically. Since Storm [played by Halle Berry] produces adverse weather conditions, as part of her super-powers, this was a valid question.

DeSanto defended the veil of secrecy that has surrounded this production, and the ban on discussing the plot of the movie in any detail. "It's like when you're a kid with a Christmas gift," DeSanto began, "Half the fun is shaking the box and try-

ing to guess what is inside." DeSanto, who worked with director Bryan Singer on THE USUAL SUSPECTS and co-produced his next film, APT PUPIL, analogized about what happens if someone tells the child what it is just as he's opening the present. "What's wrong with going into the theater not knowing anything about the movie, and letting it happen?"

"Let's put it this way," DeSanto teased, "the fans that know the storyline are very happy. It's centered around what I feel is the crux of the mythology: Xavier and Magneto. Those two philosophies butting heads with humanity."

**A**sked what characters would be changed from their comic book version, to work in the film version, DeSanto mentioned The Toad. "Toad's probably the character we changed most from what he was in the comic. Toad, in the comic, was sort of this nebbish sycophant of Magneto's. How could we make this character formidable, but still keep elements of the original; make it humorous without making it campy. The humor comes out of the characters, but not out of making fun of the characters. That's why I think the third SUPERMAN movie failed. As soon as you bring Richard Pryor into the mix, you no longer believe a man can fly. You begin to see the wires. It loses its magic."

From the first time DeSanto read an X-Men comic as a child, "The characters and the whole mythology of this world...I fell in love with it," DeSanto said. "When you're a kid, you cry out, 'Why can't anyone see how unique and special I am, and celebrate that instead of beating me down for it?' The X-Men do that. They go to a school where their uniqueness is embraced."

DeSanto feels that Singer can bring a unique quality to this production. "Bryan doesn't make movies. He makes films," said DeSanto of his collaborator. "He's a great storyteller. His handling of the ensemble cast in THE USUAL SUSPECTS [was great]; giving each of those



# X-MEN

## COMIC BOOK ORIGINS

The X-MEN movie comprises heroes from many different eras in the series, 30 years, and if future sequels occur, other heroes and villains discussed here may also be brought to the big screen.

The first issue of *The X-Men*, September 1963, debuted to absolutely no fanfare. The cover proclaimed these new powerful teens “the strangest superheros of all,” but X-Men was not a very good seller for Marvel Comics Group in the 1960’s, despite having artwork by such legendary comic book artists as Jack Kirby, Alex Toth, Jim Steranko, Barry Smith and Neal Adams, among others.

Marvel Comics, now Marvel Entertainment, will tell you that the X-Men, like most of the Marvel characters, were created by Stan Lee. But Jack Kirby, to his dying day swore that the concepts for X-Men and many other Marvel heroes came solely from his own head, and that Lee only wrote partial dialogue and served mainly as editor and occasional sounding board. What we do know for sure is that Kirby laid out and penciled the first 11 issues of *X-Men* and laid out many more for succeeding artists.

Originally, Lee had planned to call the new book *The Mutants*, but publisher Martin Goodman at that time thought the title would discourage sales to children, who he thought would not know the meaning of the word mutant. The storylines in the early days centered around a school for mutants, a setting which will form the heart of Bryan Singer’s film. The first five students were Scott Summers, Jean Grey, Hank McCoy, Bobby Drake and Warren Worthington III. Each student was given a uniform, tailored to



The first September 1963 issue of Marvel's enduring comic book franchise, a debut with no fanfare and initially with little success.

each one's special needs, but identical in color (blue and yellow) with an “X” on the belt buckle.

Each was given a code name. Jean Grey's was Marvel Girl, whose telekinetic power to move objects and people with her mind, was almost as effective as that of Professor X himself. Her love interest was the leader of the super-team, Scott, whose code-name of Cyclops was appropriate. Though he had two eyes that could see, he was forced to wear a visor at all times, or the destructive red beams that came from his eyes would destroy everything in its path.

Worthington was the rich kid of the group and was known as The Angel, due to the enormous wings that grew out of his back. The Beast was the big-footed, yet highly intelligent scientist of the team, and Hank McCoy was known to use vocabulary that was comical coming out of such a brutish figure. Bobby was Iceman, who could ride on a sheet of ice, freeze villains solid or attack with an icestorm.

Their primary foes were at first The Brotherhood Of Evil Mutants, any one of which could often fight the group to a stand-still. Among the most memorable adversaries of The X-Men were Magneto, The Vanisher, Mesmero, The Juggernaut, The Sentinels, Unus The Untouchable, The Blob, The Mimic, The Toad and The Stranger.

Other characters, like Havok (brother of Cyclops), Polaris, Sunfire, The Banshee, Quicksilver and The Scarlet Witch seemed at first to be villainous, but later fought on the good guy's side.

In the 38th issue, Professor X died, and in the following issue, the group went on without him and got new, more individual costumes. But by issue #65, The Professor returned, revealing that it had been someone else (The Changeling) that had taken his place, and was now dead. These major changes in the series did little to help its sales, yet with the addition of scripters Roy Thomas, Arnold Drake and Denny O'Neil, the stories got even more dazzling, complex and mind-blowing.

After 66 issues, *X-Men* ceased to publish new adventures, turning the series over to reprints from the early issues. The *X-Men* were not selling well enough to justify more stories. Then, in the summer of 1975, *Giant-Size X-Men #1* appeared, reviving the group with a brand new line-up of heroes from all over the world. Scott and Jean Grey were on hand to help Professor X train the newcomers, including Storm, Wolverine, Colossus, Nightcrawler, Banshee and Thunderbird. When *The X-Men* monthly comic book resumed after a five-year hiatus, it began new stories with issue #94 and continues to this day.

Paul Wardle

characters a unique personality. I felt he would take it seriously. The first two scripts I read were not taking it seriously. They weren't getting it. It's about Xavier and Magneto. It's Martin Luther King and Malcolm X and the next wave of human evolution. The themes of prejudice and the outcast really resonated with Bryan.”

Tracing his long involvement with this project, DeSanto noted, “The first time I inquired about [it] was October of 1995. Peter Rice, who was then an executive at 20th Century-Fox, now president of Fox Searchlight, and I had become friends. Bryan knew I had written a treatment for ALIEN 4, and called Peter up to take a look [at my treatment].”

When the studio decided to go with another version, DeSanto asked about X-MEN, found out that the original directorial choice had dropped out, and saw the first two scripts. When they were deemed inadequate by Singer and DeSanto, they began to discuss a different approach. “Bryan was initially resistant,” said DeSanto, “because I think everyone who doesn't know comic books immediately classifies them as juvenile and childish, but in fact they are an important American artform with some great stories.

“I was given the task of taking over 30 years of mythology and diluting it down to two hours,” he said. “Bryan went back and pitched [Rice] the story and they thought it was great.”

Following the go ahead, DeSanto met with Stan Lee, charismatic figurehead of Marvel, who edited and wrote the earliest issues of the *X-Men* comics as well as countless other Marvels. Bryan's vision for the film was pitched to Stan and to Lauren [Sculer-Donner] at Fox and it was approved by all as in keeping with the Marvel image. “Ultimately, it's Bryan's vision. Otherwise it's going to be phony and false,” said DeSanto.

Yet it was up to DeSanto, the resident fanboy, to educate Singer, who represents the non-comic reading audience. Extensive discussions of the characters and their comics followed. “Why do they wear costumes?”



# X-MEN

## SABRETOOTH TYLER MANE

*The wrestler on turning  
Marvel supervillain.*

By Paul Wardle

A relative newcomer to the *X-Men* comics, Sabretooth has nevertheless appeared in many related titles and solo adventures. Though he is not so much a villain as a tortured anti-hero, in the *X-MEN* film directed by Bryan Singer, the character serves primarily as a foe to fight Wolverine. Sabretooth's great size and savage countenance requires an actor with an imposing physical appearance. Filling that bill is Tyler Mane, who will no doubt be well-known to fans of pro-wrestling, but much less so to moviegoers. He wrestled for 11 years, primarily as a bad guy. Standing a colossal six-foot 10 inches and weighing 270 pounds, Mane will no doubt look the part of the enor-

The Sabretooth of the comics battles Jean Grey. Mane read the books each day on the set to get inside his role.

mous beast-like mutant, but in real life he is friendly and non-threatening.

In Toronto to film *THE X-MEN*, Mane made a special trip to the set on his day off to chat with journalists covering the production. "Sabretooth is a mutant," said Mane, "with superhuman strength and it's a fun thing. You get to do something totally different from a normal acting role. You get to throw people all over the place, and beat the heck out of them. It's like a flashback to the wrestling days. He's just got a one-track mind...tearing people apart. You don't have to worry about being a nice guy. He's more about action than speaking. He takes care of business, then worries about the consequences later."

The climactic battle between Sabretooth and reluctant X-Man Wolverine, contains no deep philosophical motive. "Every time I see [Wolverine], I want to tear his arms off and flog him as best I can."

"I believe Sabretooth is approximately 150 years old," Mane continued. "and Wolverine is about 50+ years old. They both go back to the days of FBI special forces together. They've got a long history."

Mane researched his role by reading dozens of Marvel comics that feature Sabretooth and Wolverine. "I couldn't believe the price of them!" he joked. "Somebody's making a lot of money!" It wasn't until he put on the costume, however, that he really felt like Sabretooth. "It took a little getting used to. I'm wearing four-inch lifts in it. Like 6'10" wasn't tall enough. I'm completely in



Mane howls as Sabretooth, Magneto's destroyer and main henchman, big, bad and leather-clad, with four-inch lifts that make him tower to a height of 7'2".

leather, and it was pretty heavy and took a while to get worked in, but then it was okay."

From the comics, Mane learned to possess the right attitude for Sabretooth. "The way Sabretooth's lines were written, he's not very well-spoken. He's more of a grunter and groaner. Every day I would read the comics and then go to work. I'd try to get that primitive, animalistic feel to [my performance], and after sitting in a trailer for hours, it's very easy to get to that state [he laughed]."

"Sabretooth doesn't really care about many things or people. Even the people who are on his side, he doesn't think are on his side. He's looking out for number one." In the film, Sabretooth joins up with The Brotherhood Of Evil Mutants, but like his counterpart in the *X-Men*, Wolverine, Sabretooth isn't much of a team player.

"Sabretooth is [Magneto's] main henchman; a destroyer. He's the one Magneto counts on to get things done."

Despite the caveman-type impulses that Mane must call up to play Sabretooth, his training in professional wrestling has enabled him to get in and out of character without injuring fellow actors. "I'm pretty much able to control that," he said, but he is tough. Refusing to take off the special lenses he wears on his eyes for the character, Mane almost suffered eye damage, because he was trying to be a trooper who didn't need to fol-

low doctors' orders.

The most memorable scene in the film for Tyler Mane was a battle sequence in a train station. It was the first time he met Ian McKellen (who plays Magneto) and Halle Berry (who plays Storm, one of the *X-Men*). "I've done some film work before," said Mane, "but nothing along these lines, with this big a budget. Surely I haven't worked with people of this caliber. It was very educational to watch them work."

Fighting with Hugh Jackman who plays Wolverine, also worked very well for the veteran wrestler. "He's got stage fighting experience. When we got together, it was a lot of fun experimenting and developing things. He came in with an understanding of how he wanted Wolverine to react to situations and I had [similar thoughts with regard to my character], and it was very open. If I felt that Sabretooth would not do a certain move, we would change it, and he would do the same with Wolverine."

Adapting his wrestling techniques to Sabretooth posed little problem for Mane who was a villain in his former profession. "It is a little different, because you don't really have super-human strength, but all the fighting [experience] definitely did help. I think it put Hugh's mind at ease when he found out I had 11 and a half years of that background. To wrestle professionally, you need to know what the heck you're doing." □







Bruce Davison as the mutant-hating Senator Kelly, ironically finds a safe haven among the X-Men (l to r) Famke Janssen, James Marsden and Patrick Stewart.

was one of the questions Singer asked early in these talks. True to the X-Men mythology, this question and others that even comic fans may have always wondered about, have been worked into the script.

Likewise, DeSanto claimed there is a scene which explains why Jean Grey is not given a code-name like the others. In the comics, Jean was often referred to as Marvel Girl in the 1960's and as Phoenix in the mid-to-late 1970's.

The crew for the film consisted of over 350 personnel, and an extra 50-75 part-timers on any given day, mostly for makeup and effects work. Location shooting took place in Washington, D.C., and parts of Canada. The interior of the Casa-Loma, in Toronto, Ontario, Lakeside Park in Burlington, Ontario and the inside of Roy Thomson Hall in Toronto's theatre district were only a few of the sites used. The exterior of Magneto's lair was shot in a conservation area. An eight inch lip was built on top of the ground and flooded with water.

In addition to the costumes that each member of the X-Men wear, other accessories to suit the characters' individual needs, had to be developed. A special wheelchair was built for Professor Xavier and four different sets of claws are used for Wolverine. Despite the excellence of the sets and effects, the production has somehow managed to stay under budget.

The only major compromise DeSanto and the crew have had

to make is continuity. Ideally, DeSanto would have liked to present the X-Men's history chronologically and explore all the relationships as they occurred in the comics, but it was obvious early on that this was impossible. Some characters would have to be dropped, and a mixture of new and older characters would be joined together in a manner that doesn't necessarily coincide with their comics' counterparts. But the makers of this film realize that comics don't necessarily translate to film as written. Adjustments must be made, and this includes fans, who will have to adjust to not having their own way and judging the finished film on its own merits.

Though fans may have problems with individual details in the sets, costumes or casting, Singer is adamant that this is not a movie made by people who have no affinity for the comics. The last three years of intensive research into the genre, and the advice of his colleagues has opened him up to a new world, one that he is determined to bring to the screen without compromising either his ideals, nor the traditions that have carried these characters through the decades. Throughout that time there have been numerous changes to the X-Men style, costumes and membership, not without some anger from fans. While this film will also provoke similar responses from some fans, it seems, at least, that its heart is in the right place. □

# X-MEN

## TOAD RAY PARK

*The STAR WARS star  
on a new comic book role.*

*By Paul Wardle*

Ever since Ray Park won the coveted role of Sith lord Darth Maul in George Lucas' STAR WARS EPISODE 1: THE PHANTOM MENACE, he has been astonished by all the attention he has received. Park has been involved in Chinese martial arts since age seven, and though his training was a definite plus when capturing his character in X-MEN, he has been thrust into the spotlight very soon after his acting career had begun. Having met STAR WARS fans at conventions and other promotional gatherings, Park was unprepared for the seriousness with which some fans take the subject matter. The same is true of comic book fans, and Park will no doubt run into similar adulation after he appears in X-MEN.

Park has been cast as The Toad, a malevolent misanthrope who kowtows to the X-Men's chief nemesis, Magneto. In the X-Men comics, Toad was one of the first villains the X-Men ever faced, appearing as early as 1963. The ugly little hopping creature was never much of a problem for the superheros, but Magneto was a different story. The makers of this film have altered the character of The Toad somewhat, making him more interesting and complex.

The British-born Park, who represented Britain all over the world on the nation's martial arts team, made his first trip to Canada, where much of the filming for X-MEN took place. "Toad is more of a... 'toady,'" Park began, in reference to his character, "a greedy, toady su-

per-human who has powers. He can jump and leap and bound. That's where he gets his name from. I never knew there was a character called Toad in the X-Men [comics] when I was a kid. He's a lackey, in a way, but that's different in the movie.

"From what I've been told, Toad wasn't in the [comics] that much, so it's a very good opportunity for me to try and develop the character. I tried a lot of different ideas. He has to be hard, in a way. He's evil, but also, [I wanted to make him] funny, geeky, slimy, creepy looking; to try to bring all those aspects into it, which I hope I've achieved."

The film was still shooting near the end of February, reaching 100 days or more of filming, before post-production work was even begun. During that time, Park had a lot to get used to, including a long, protruding tongue that Toad has been given. "It's about six feet [long] and it does grow to 12 feet," Park elaborated. "It's green and slimy and gooey. It's good, because it gives Toad a little bit more versatility, not just in ability for fighting, acrobatics, but it's funny as well. It's a cool idea."

The darting tongue was a mix of prosthetics and CGI effects, an innovation that sets the Toad apart from his comic book counterpart who had no such appendage. Though Park can't reveal what scenes feature the Toad's tongue, he promises it will not be pornographic. "I had to have this mouthpiece fitted," he revealed. "They just bent a mold to fit my mouth. I only wear it when [my character] has to use it."





Park plays Toad, one of Magneto's lackey's, with a slimy 12-foot tongue.

The endless jumps and leaps executed by the Toad have certainly benefitted from Park's extensive martial arts training. Though stunt doubles and effects were occasionally used, Park didn't want to rely too heavily on them. "It's got to be believable, as well. He's a mutant, but he's human. It's got to look like just a little bit more than the average person," said Park of the jumps. In real life, he can jump over the height of his own head.

Working with veteran actors like Ian McKellen (Magneto) and Patrick Stewart (Professor X), is a wonderful education for the newcomer. In particular, the nature of the Toad's subservience to Magneto dictates that they must have many scenes together. "I'm working with some really good actors," Park reported glowingly. "I just sit back, open my eyes and ears, and listen. I've got so much to learn, and I want to develop more as an actor. If I've got an idea, I will [suggest it to Ian], or to [director] Bryan [Singer]. It's great to not be afraid to do that and to just relax and be creative and try new things."

Specifically, Park drew

strength from McKellen's incredible confidence as an actor. "How he's just sure of himself, and you can tell his experience comes into it. If he didn't like something or wanted a different way to say something, he knew exactly what he wanted. It's been so good for me to just sit back and watch."

Park loves the chance to play a physical character like Toad. Even as a child, he jumped off buildings and did dangerous stunts for his age, without the fear that comes with experience. Even now, he approaches potentially dangerous moves with no trepidation for his safety. His martial arts have been used as a basis for the three fighting characters he has played in films so far, including the Headless Horseman of *SLEEPY HOLLOW*.

"I've been doing it 18 years," he said. "That gave me the discipline and taught me to focus. The challenge is not to get too uptight, and I can always overcome a challenge by visualizing what I want to do. It always goes back to my training when I used to compete. If there's anything I can't do, I just go back to basics and break

**"If I'm totally evil all the time," mused actor Ray Park, "it's boring. It's got to have that sleazy comic speck to it as well. There has got to be a balance."**

it down, and analyze why I can't do it. Then I just start from the basics and work myself up. In all the things that I've done, I wouldn't necessarily be doing martial arts stuff, but it would just be that training, the preparation, the condition of my body, that would help. My body is used to doing different stuff.

"I seem to work better when I'm working more," said Park. He is not one for sitting around on movie sets. Of course this is inevitable unless you're in every shot. "It's like an addiction for me," Park said of his training. "I try to keep up all my training when I'm on a movie, but it's hard. When [nothing's happening for me on the set], I just buy loads of magazines and CDs and eat a lot, and just go to the gym every chance I get to burn it all off."

The lithe, athletically built Park also differs from the Toad of the comics in stature. Unlike most heroes and villains in comics, Jack Kirby created a misshapen little monstrosity for the body of Toad. In the guise of Ray Park, the character will be more formidable-looking.

His character's function in the movie is primarily to do work to fulfill the needs of Magneto, "without him lifting a hand, and I'm creating [mayhem] in a way, maybe mucking things up." This is where the character's comic relief sensibility comes into play. "If I'm totally evil all the time," Park mused, "it's boring. It's got to have that sleazy comic speck to it as well. There's got to be a balance."

With his newfound popularity from playing Darth Maul, Park has come under close scrutiny from fans of the *STAR WARS* series, and will no doubt face another round of fan criticism with this role. Is he prepared for what's inevitably to come? "Darth Maul was an evil

guy, but then they meet me, and I'm totally different. When I talked about how I prepare and train, it made a lot of people want to start martial arts. I teach gymnastics as well, and all the kids were just blown away by [Darth Maul], and playing with the action figures. I remember when I was a kid, I wanted to be a super-human as well, so it's great to see their reaction."

Park also says it's more fun to play villains than heroes. "There's no rules really. You can just have fun with it. I haven't chosen to play bad guys. It's just happened that way. And everyone seems to like the bad guys anyway."

Although he's worked with directors George Lucas and Tim Burton, Park says he's comfortable with Bryan Singer as a director. Singer has been very helpful to Park in trying out new approaches to his character. "I wondered how I was going to do this without making it a cliché, like *THE HUNCHBACK OF NOTRE DAME* or something? I didn't want to go that route." □

Marvel's Quasimodo-like Toad, to the left of Magneto in the original story of the Brotherhood of Evil Mutants.





# CHICKEN RUN

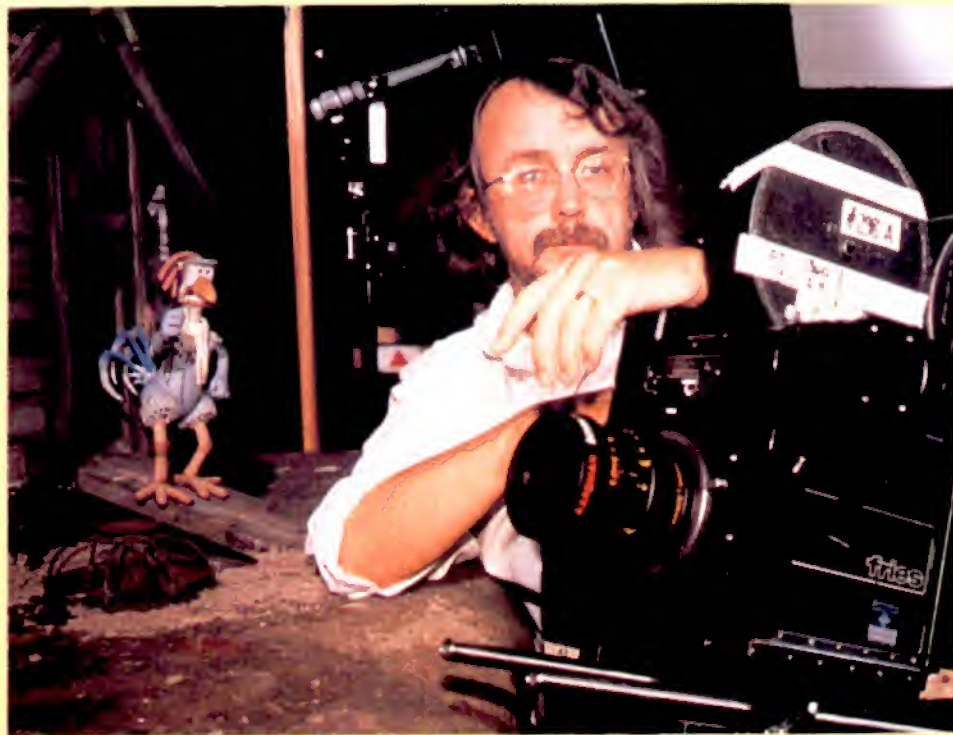
By Alan Jones

Nick Park and Peter Lord's CHICKEN RUN will introduce moviegoers to a one-of-a-kind look and style of animation that has never been seen before in a feature film. The two leading lights of the Bristol-based Aardman Studios have put their unique brand of storytelling, as seen in the classic Oscar-winning shorts CREATURE COMFORTS and THE WRONG TROUSERS, through the specialized art of stop-motion animation to craft the first full-length claymation, actually plasticine-mation, feature. The first of their five-picture deal with Dreamworks SKG, the June 23 release is basically THE GREAT ESCAPE with chickens featuring the voices of Mel Gibson, Miranda Richardson, Julia Sawalha and Jane Horrocks.

Co-director Nick Park said, "Aardman is the direct beneficiary of everything that has happened in the animation field since Disney's THE LITTLE MERMAID stormed the box-office. Britain took over the art form from the Eastern Europeans in many respects and THE NIGHTMARE BEFORE CHRISTMAS proved you could have a mainstream success with an animation technique other than the two-dimensional drawing. We did the deal with Dreamworks rather than any other studio because they were the only ones who said it was fine for us to keep our individual animation quality. Okay, we knew we'd have to change our operation to achieve it in a mass-produced sort of way, but at least we would be left alone to work it all out for ourselves."

He added, "I never wanted Aardman to lose our specific handmade quality either. That was another psychological ob-

## Aardman Animation on their stop-motion hit for DreamWorks.



Aardman co-directors Peter Lord (above) and Nick Park, completing their first stop-motion feature for DreamWorks, which opened nationwide June 23.



stacle for me when we first started talking to studios about the move into features. The last Wallace and Gromit short, A CLOSE SHAVE, had a crew of 40 as opposed to 12 for the one before it and I was frightened even then of losing our distinctive look. I quickly realized we'd have to start a heavy training program to teach people our particular craft. I'm rather pleased that the eight key animators who are directly under Peter and I for CHICKEN RUN, and are so crucial to us now, were beginners three years ago."

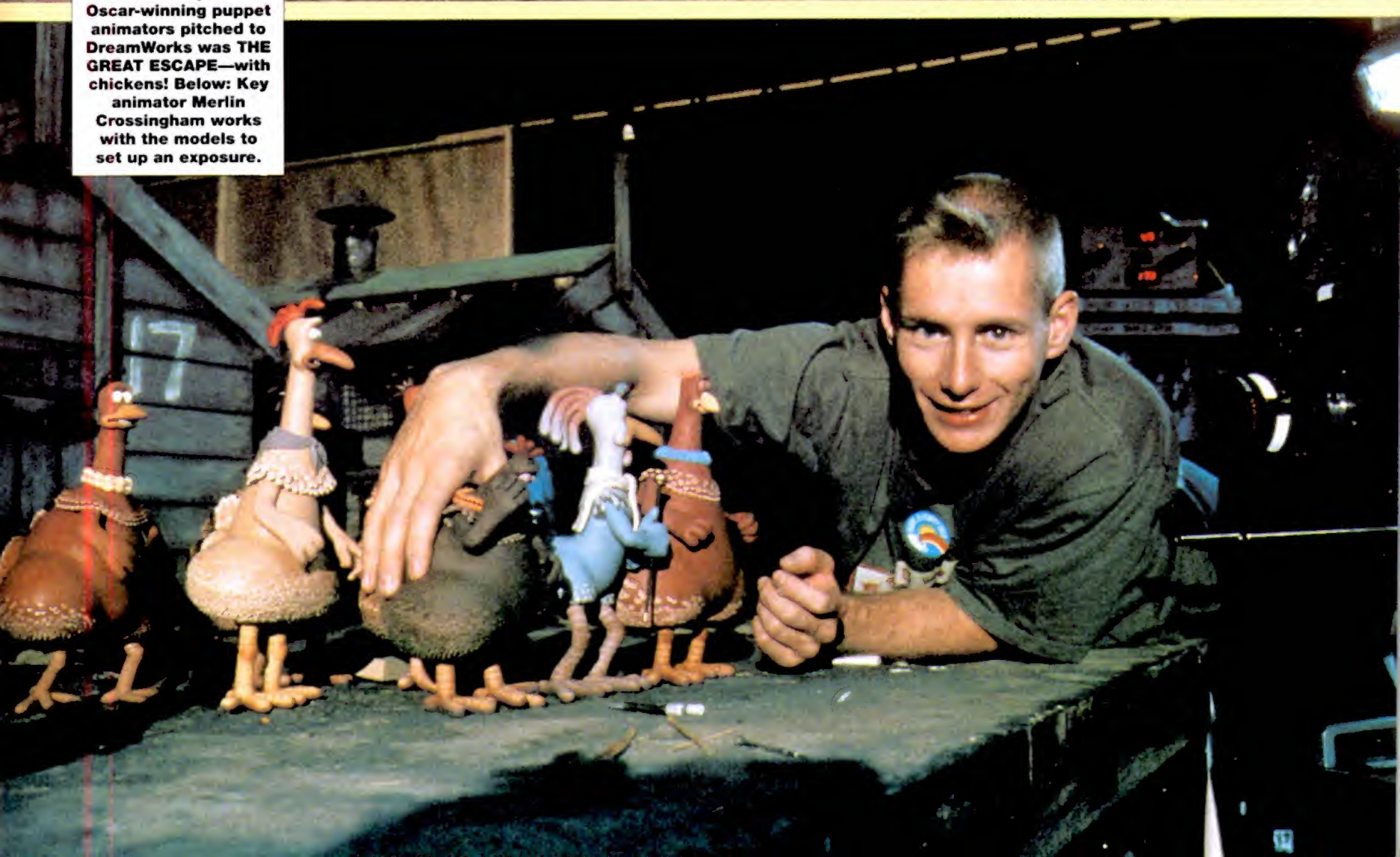
One of those key animators is Merlin Crossingham who took a degree course in animation at Newport Film School before joining Aardman Studios as a trainee assistant. He remarked, "I also did work experience with Ray Harryhausen on his last directing job, a commercial for Dairy Lea Dunkers (a cheese snack). It was interesting because we did everything using traditional methods, including back projection. Ray came on the CHICKEN RUN sets a few weeks ago to look around and couldn't believe how far the craft he was partly responsible for developing had moved on. It was funny because he gazed in amazement at the number of animators and puppet makers and kept repeating how he can't believe he managed to do everything on his own."

Crossingham has been involved in CHICKEN RUN from its first development in 1998 as he explained. "My first introduction to the concept was a short pilot film that Nick had made as a pitch to Dreamworks. I properly came aboard the project once the main puppets had been built and we had to check to see if they would stand up to the working schedule and achieve what we wanted them to do. For example, Nick and Peter





The concept the Oscar-winning puppet animators pitched to DreamWorks was **THE GREAT ESCAPE**—with chickens! Below: Key animator Merlin Crossingham works with the models to set up an exposure.





wanted to know if the chickens would be able to peck the ground. As it turned out, they couldn't because of their design. So in the end the shot in question was amended to them making pecking motions in the air in an attempt to fool Mr. Tweedy the Farmer that they were not acting suspiciously. The shape of the chicken puppets also meant we couldn't show them sitting down so we had to circumvent any such action with a transition shot. It was important we discovered the puppets' physical design restraints early on so we could make their limitations assets instead."

Crossingham's main CHICKEN RUN workload included Rocky the American Rooster's arrival at the farm to galvanize the downtrodden hens into making one final break for freedom, and the chickens on parade sequences. He continued, "Nick and Peter would pitch us scenes which we would then have to look after and solve the difficult challenges within the parameters of what they'd story-boarded. Within each core team would be an animator, an assistant and a key animator using a video monitor to ensure exact continuity. One major function the video has is a frame store which allows us to keep the last image filmed which then flashes between that and the shot we're working on for perfect fluidity. Then every-

## MERLIN CROSSINGHAM, ANIMATOR

**"We left a lot of the hard scenes right until the end of the shoot. That was done on purpose to provide us with a constant challenge rather than let our creative juices slacken off."**



The chickens of hut 17 celebrate their plan to escape Tweedy's egg farm. Below: Implementing the tunneling scheme. Left: The key to breaking out turns on the arrival of a celebrated American rooster (left), voiced by Mel Gibson.



thing is triple-checked before we commit anything to film."

After a rough lighting test, one of the two directors of photography (either Tristan Oliver or Frank Passingham) then frame the shot up, Park or Lord rehearse the exact actions within it to get the performance nuances sorted out and then the whole scene is blocked out and filmed on video. Crossingham added, "That footage is then



viewed again the next day where we go through all aspects of timing, position and composition and, once Nick or Peter are completely happy, we go for the shot. Sometimes we have gone straight for it but this preparation period is our general method to sort out eye-lines and promote absolute confidence in the camera moves."

Each key animator works on numerous scenes with the whole gamut of characters, pointed out Crossingham. "That's where what we do differs from 2-D animators who specialize in one particular character throughout the entire shoot. On a 3-D set it is impossible to have one person solely responsible for one character as we all have to be ready to animate any of them at any given point. To get a consistent continuity is a major headache. There is some slight difference in each key animator's sculpting technique but not enough for it to cause any perceptible problems. Some big scenes also have two key animators working on them and, if my schedule allows, I will help anyone out who needs it."

Naturally the pressure to get each shot right the first time is quite intense. Crossingham remarked, "Reshoots would always have scheduling implications especially at this late stage in the production where we are only three months away from release. It seemed a luxury to have an 18-month shoot when we first started out too! What has been interesting is that problems we first encountered a year ago aren't anymore because we've solved them so many times since. One of those was animating the puppets in the space they are in, and not on the screen, because it is so easily to get side-tracked from that goal. We have left a lot of the hard scenes right until the end of the shoot, meaning a slower pace, because they are mostly action-driven. That was done on purpose to provide us with a constant challenge rather than let our creative juices slacken off. It's a permanent reminder that we still have lots to learn before we move on to the next picture in the deal, THE TORTOISE AND THE HARE." □



# HOLLOW MAN

## Star Kevin Bacon on the pain of turning invisible for director Paul Verhoeven.

By Chuck Wagner

The scene from within Stage 12 on the Sony/Columbia/Tri-Star lot was interesting. In a warm and muggy set recreating an outdoor backyard scene complete with swimming pool, *HOLLOW MAN* star Kevin Bacon—covered almost totally in black—drowned William Devane amidst much splashing—and the shouts of “cut” from director Paul Verhoeven. He may be coated in a color and destined to be invisible, but that’s Bacon doing a lot of his own stunts. In *THE HOLLOW MAN*, he plays a scientist who works in a group dedicated to unlocking the secret of invisibility, who then co-opts the power for his own, evil ends. Sony opens the film nationwide July 28.

“The thing about stunt men,” Bacon explained in his trailer, his face covered in black grease paint and a jet black wig (“this is Elvis’ wig!” he quipped) on his head, “is that it’s much more difficult to use a stunt man in this picture, from a technical standpoint. The reason is that there’s a digital man that’s been built completely from my specifications. I’ve had countless cyber-scans of my head and my body. Tons of video—digital video. Tons of photographs taken of me standing in front of a graph. They’ve actually painted a graph on my body! All of this information input into a computer. And the digital man they’ve built is just to my specifications.

“So, for instance, when I do something in green—or in black, like we’re doing today, underwater—they replace it with the digital man, building from the skeleton up, based on my skeleton. What I’m going to become in the pool sequence is like bubbles...Bubble-man.”

Even though Bacon’s character is invisible, bubbles of trapped air would still adhere to him, and this effect will be modeled as necessary.

“Whatever the stunt guy was to do, it



Bacon as research scientist Sebastian Caine with fellow scientist Elizabeth Shue, unlocking the secrets of invisibility with tragic consequences.

doesn’t quite line up as well. For instance, his forearm might be fatter than mine. It makes it a lot more difficult to do the matching. It would make the process slower and harder and all that. Plus, I guess [director] Paul [Verhoeven] feels that there’s a lot of very specific movement that’s specific to my performance.

“Is this as hard as I expected? I think it’s the hardest thing I’ve ever done, definitely. But I don’t think it’s even so much from a physical standpoint, because I’ve done a lot of physical movies. The hardest part for me, is that for months I haven’t really felt that much like an actor. So that creatively, it’s a little bit difficult to go home and say, ‘All right, I really did a good day’s work that day,’ when really all I’m doing is going—” he dangles his hands in the air as if they’re on strings—“I’m like a puppet, basically. I’m a painted puppet that will be replaced. That’s what’s difficult.

“I love to act. That’s what I do, and I enjoy doing it...but I haven’t felt that way on this picture for a long, long time. One of the reasons is that we have had the luxury of shooting almost entirely in sequence, because we’re on sets; the main heart of the film takes place in the lab. The laboratory set is one complete unit. It’s not a bunch of

individual sets. So as scenes would move, we’d just go up the hall. We’d go to the next scene. We shot totally in sequence for a really long time, which is kind of cool from an actor’s standpoint. From a director’s standpoint it’s great, because you know where you’re at, as opposed to going back and constantly checking.

“The fact that it’s being done in sequence means that once I start to become invisible—and especially when I slip into the monstrous qualities of the character—there’s very little left of what I would consider performance.”

Bacon was fully aware of the harsh demands the role would impose, but the loss of performance

elements—facial expressions, for example—he wasn’t totally prepared for. And since he is supposed to be unseen, it did occur to him to ponder: “Do I really need to be here? Couldn’t the coffee cup just be hung from a string? Couldn’t I just do a voice-over?”

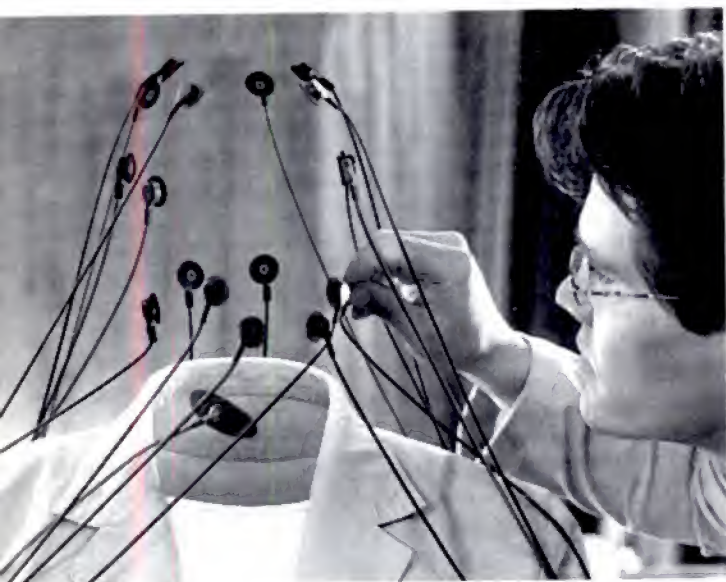
“Oh definitely!” he agreed with a smile. “Sounds like a great gig, doesn’t it! The invisible man—you don’t have to show up! But I tell you, I’ve had longer hours in this movie, than in any movie I’ve ever been seen in!”

But because he is there on the set and in the scene, he adds something of himself, however nearly intangible it might be. His style of movement is copied onto the digital version of himself as well, making it intrinsically Bacon.

“If you’re really just thinking about your voice, it lends a certain quality to the performance. You have to keep remembering that there is a certain power that comes from, for instance, whispering in someone’s ear when they can’t see you at all and don’t know where you are. This character is constantly thrilled and excited by the way he wields his power and ability. And his voice is one of the things that’s partly there.

“I’ll be interested to see how much we end up looping [redoing spoken dialogue in





Bacon, discovering the molecular key to invisibility, a seemingly transparent role that became the most challenging of his movie career, with Josh Brolin.

# PAUL VERHOEVEN

*The master of science fiction longs for a break from special effects.*

by Douglas Eby

the audio studio to compensate or alter the live, recorded sound of the original performance] because of how my voice gets changed on the set. We did a lot of testing. I wear a latex mask through part of it."

Bacon's scientist wears a mask, clothes and gloves when he wants to be seen. "The eyes and mouth of the mask are cut out and you see right through into nothing," Bacon said. Hence the title, *THE HOLLOW MAN*. "I also wear teeth: green dentures. The combination of the mask and teeth closing off my nasal passages makes an odd vocal sound." Bacon mentioned that sometimes he's spray-coated with an air brush, such as you might use to paint a car! And how was it wearing the mask?

"Horrible. It was my least favorite thing. I think we had 30 days, or something like that. It takes a long time to put on and take off. The first day, they said, 'Do you want to leave it on through lunch? You can eat with it on.' I said, 'Yeah, it's going to be a pain in the ass to put it on and take it off.'"

So he left it on for the entire shooting day... "I did that one day. By the end of that day, I wanted to jump out a window! So I would take it off at lunch. It was glued to my face, so it could show expressions. It could smile if I smiled. You could wrinkle the forehead, and stuff like that."

Is his role a monster or does the power of invisibility make him monstrous? "You might get a different answer from me than you would from Paul. I don't know. The decision I made was that, had he never become invisible, would he go out and do these horrible things...kill people, rape, whatever? No! But, the power—the pain that he went through to get into it and try to get out of it—the feeling of being trapped—the insanity all came out of the invisibility. However, would everybody who went through this experiment turn into a monster? No. The guy's definitely pre-disposed—incredibly voyeuristic. He's a megalomaniac with a gigantic ego. And those always go hand-in-hand with deep-seated insecurity. He's very, very power-hungry. He's the perfect guy to turn into a monster!" □

Regarding his choice of Kevin Bacon for the lead in *THE HOLLOW MAN*, director Paul Verhoeven noted, "I was always a big admirer of Kevin Bacon, though I'd never worked with him. There were other proposals on the table, but with all the considerations of money and availability and other things, he worked the best."

Agreeing that Bacon can play hero or villain, he said, "And he can go in between. I think it's an excellent choice. I met him in December [1998], in New York, and I thought, 'This is the guy.' I'd always looked at his work with a lot of pleasure, and I thought he could do it. He's very talented. What you need also is a guy who's very down to earth, and wouldn't mind getting painted all the time, blue or green or whatever, or put a suit on. And he's suffering a lot. To get painted is one thing; to get it off is another. And he had full contact lenses on all the time, over the whole eyeball. Very annoying. And on top of that, the latex mask he uses in part of the movie is glued to his skin, and it starts to pull off after three or four hours. So you need a person who knows how to suffer."

Production of the film was delayed about halfway through from a tendon injury that kept Elisabeth Shue out of commission. Shue plays Linda Foster, a fellow scientist who was a former lover of Caine, Bacon's character. "She was working out here on the Sony lot, and misstepped getting off a trampoline," Verhoeven explained. "It was a freak accident. Nobody's guilty."

Verhoeven admitted having this kind of interruption, and anticipating the need to get the energy of the production up to speed again, was not easy to deal with. "I'm looking at it with fear and dread," he said during



The director of *ROBOCOP*, *TOTAL RECALL* and *STARSHIP TROOPERS* has future plans to vary his movie repertoire.

the hiatus while Shue healed. "I mean that, more than you think. Shooting a movie is always quite an ordeal, the time and energy you have to put into it to keep it all moving, and keep it aggressive and interesting and edgy." Looking toward getting back into production after the break, he noted, brought up questions like "Will I be motivated enough? Will I be tired? Will I be able to keep doing good work?" But he also recalled an earlier film of his, shot in Holland, that required shooting in different seasons. "So we stopped even longer than

here, and in fact, it didn't matter at all. In one or two days we were back in the groove."

There was even some consideration to replace Shue, but Verhoeven noted, "I was very against that. I think she's doing a great job, and gives the movie a lot of warmth, and becomes a warrior at the end, because she has to kill him, or he'll kill her. She doesn't normally play that kind of character. What she adds to the movie immediately, from the beginning, is a lot of warmth and charm. In the beginning, you identify with Sebastian [Bacon] to a certain degree, but when he follows these paths of darkness, the question is how long will the audience follow him? When he gets more evil, their focus will be Elisabeth. At the start, he was the leader of the project, and forces the other scientists to go that way. But then she becomes the hero."

When another scientist in the group, Matt Kensington (Josh Brolin), becomes Linda Foster's new love interest, she still has feelings for Caine, Verhoeven noted: "They were living together, and broke up for some reason, but there's still residual stuff that always plays. Especially with Elisabeth that plays very well, because she





Cardiologist Carter Abbey (Greg Grunberg) falls prey to invisible enemy Sebastian Caine.

has a real talent in communicating sympathy, love or sexuality to people." The script went through a number of drafts in order to make the Kensington and Foster characters "more and more realistic" he said.

"So they would not be talking cliches, that they would not say all the time, 'Come on, let's go!' or 'We have to go.'"

Asked if he particularly likes making science fiction films, Verhoeven emphatically answered, "No. I like science fiction movies, I've always liked that. But making them is quite an ordeal. It's much more pleasant to do, say, *SHOWGIRLS*, than *HOLLOW MAN*. It's tedious, it's time consuming, it's very precise. The movements of the camera are always more restrained than you want, because you realize you have to replace the background, and if the actor is walking, then you have three independent moves that have to be repeated. So you have to use a motion control track all the time, which is very time consuming. These kinds of shots, even if they're six or seven seconds, take three or four hours because the computer has to move the camera over the rails in exactly the same way, and you can't have any variation, or then you'd lose part of the background."

Referring to intensive visual effects work for this film, Verhoeven noted, "Sony is one of the few companies in town that still has their own special effects house. Most have given up, because the profits are so low, and

you need crazy people to do it, like Phil Tippett, who works 17 hours a day, seven days a week, and gets people around him who are willing to do the same for the sake of the art or beauty of effects." One of the challenges of using effects shots is to keep them integrated into the flow of the story.

"So you always feel that a special effect is part of the scene," Verhoeven explained, "and you don't get the feeling, as you often have in special effects movies, that the effect is isolated and cut in." He added that he has tried to keep effects part of other shots as much as possible, "so you feel the time and space are the same" and not disrupted when you make a cut from an effect to an actor reacting. Also, he pointed out, that once the character of Caine is invisible, "There is only a voice, and if you make too many cuts, you have no idea where the person is anymore, because you don't see him in the first

Matthew Kensington (Josh Brolin) and Janice Walton (Mary Randle) adjust the latex mask given Kevin Bacon as Caine, so he can blend in normally in society.



**“It’s much more pleasant to do, say *SHOWGIRLS*, than *HOLLOW MAN*. It’s tedious, it’s time consuming, it’s very precise.”**

**—Paul Verhoeven, director—**

place. Of course, in the latter part of the movie, where he's going to be mean, you don't want to know exactly where he is."

Speaking again of his opportunities to do films outside the science fiction genre, Verhoeven said, "I'm very proud of *ROBOCOP*, I think that's a really interesting movie. And also *STARSHIP TROOPERS*, but I'm too close to that to judge. So I like that I've done them, but I would appreciate having a little more balance." He pointed out that he's done four science fiction movies: the above titles, plus *TOTAL RECALL* and now this project, but only two other films in the U.S. "And *SHOWGIRLS* was kind of a strange experiment," he said, "because you had all these nudity issues. So I've done only one movie that was kind of normal, which was *BASIC INSTINCT*. Of course, I'm coming from a background in Europe, in Holland, where all the movies I've done are normal, all about people; some action, but not too much. They're much more about how people behave in real life. And I'm missing that. Doing one special effect movie out of three is great; three out of three is tough."

The story demands in *HOLLOW MAN* for a photo-realistic depiction of what it would actually look like for an organism to slowly become invisible has pushed Sony to develop some very advanced CGI, Verhoeven said. People at Imageworks spent days in anatomical labs, looking at the complexities of tissue and muscle structure, and body movement. The resulting CG images of Sebastian Caine's body becoming invisible in layers provide a "staggering" amount of detail, the director enthused. The Imageworks team, headed by Scott Anderson (also responsible for *STARSHIP TROOPERS*) has assured him they can handle the 350 or 400 shots, and these are "not just wire-removal, although there is that, too, but these are much more complex shots than normal," Verhoeven noted. "The heart, everything, is completely expressed digitally. I don't think anyone has gone in that direction. I told Sony they should sell it to universities and medical schools." □



# PHILIP K. DICK'S IMPOSTOR

**A science fiction exploration of the nature of identity inspired by a giant in the field.**

*By Denise Dumars*

How do you know you're human? Is it because you have a birth certificate, a driver's license, fingerprints? What if you weren't who you thought you were but were merely a simulacra, a humanoid robot, an android? Could your spouse tell? Your best friend? The government?

That's the basic set-up for *IMPOSTOR*, the new film from Gary Fleder based on the short story by Philip K. Dick. As in *BLADERUNNER*, *IMPOSTOR* is set in a believable near-future and deals with issues of identity and reality. Remember Rachel, the android in *BLADERUNNER* who believed she was real—only to find that what she remembers of her childhood was nothing more than the implanted memories of her designer's niece? *IMPOSTOR* retains some of that same disorienting doubt and suspicion, while being set during an attack on Earth by aliens. Miramax opens *IMPOSTOR* nationwide August 11.

In the film, Spence Olham (Gary Sinise) is suspected of being an impostor, an alien simulacra carrying an organic bomb. Production designer Nelson Coates noted that the futuristic building which, in the film, is the headquarters of the ESA, the film's government security agency, is really the Oakley Corporate headquarters; normally filming is not allowed there, but this time an exception was made. After all, the company's owner is a big fan of Philip K. Dick, and the building originally was designed to resemble something from one of his stories.

"We were very careful about product placement," said Coates of another important issue in the film's design. "We wanted the film to still look believable when someone rents it in 20 years. That's the problem with the product placement in films like *BLADERUNNER*, except for Coca Cola, all of the companies shown advertising in that film are out of business."

The film is to have the look of a believ-



Gary Sinise stars as Spence Olham, on the run for being suspected as an "imposter," an alien simulacra from Alpha Centauri who could be harboring a deadly organic bomb.

able future. But it is a future during wartime, and since loose lips sink ships, there is an air of paranoia over the whole world, which lives beneath overlapping force-field "domes" which protect Earth from the alien attacks.

A great deal of attention was paid to creating just the right look for the film. The sets are based on both Russian Constructivist and Futurist architecture, with a touch of the German Expressionism of films such as *THE CABINET OF DR. CALIGARI* adding a sense of spatial distortion and eeriness to the sets. Walking through the hospital set, and especially the hospital's chapel, the effect is both beautiful and unsettling, both monolithic in an almost Stalinist sense of concrete and steel, but at the same time spare and functional, and the sets have a graceful beauty. In short, the world in this film is portrayed as both Utopian and Dystopian. For Spence Olham it is about to

go from the former to the latter, in a very big way.

Noted Coates, "Probably the reason the story had never been filmed before is that in it, most of the action takes place on a ship on its way to the moon. Obviously, that's talking heads inside a vehicle. But we were in a quandary as to how to maintain that internal dilemma, and discussion, and then make it compelling cinema."

Aliens from Alpha Centauri are attacking Earth. First the ESA leader (Vincent D'Onofrio) suspects Spence, and gradually even his wife (Madeleine Stowe) and his best friend (Tony Shalhoub) come to doubt that he really is Spence Olham, the brilliant engineer who is developing the ultimate weapon against the Centauris. Olham even comes to doubt himself.

"First of all, the best thing we did was cast Gary Sinise, because he's so believable," said Coates. "We wanted to make it more of an everyman story and make it plausible SF. We also wanted to make it accessible internationally, so that cities other than those in the U.S.—especially those with better architecture—would see this futuristic city as plausible. We spoke with futurists as to what they thought the trends in architecture would be."

The paranoid, oppressive nature of wartime is conveyed not only by the set construction but also by such added touches as war propaganda posters, which are reminiscent of posters from World War II. "Wartime is always dystopian," said Coates. "There is always fear and paranoia. There's definitely Big Brother here, there's a sense of 'Are you for us or against us?' Not everyone believes in how the government is handling the war in the film. Looking at past war times, we tried to extrapolate on that in the film."

And people in *IMPOSTOR* live under constant surveillance; an implanted device in their spines is scanned each time a room





Sinise escapes detection on a near-future Earth, withstanding bombardment by alien weapons under overlapping force-field domes, production design by Nelson Coates. Miramax's Dimension Films opens the film nationwide on August 11.

**“We never see aliens,” said Coates. “I’d rather they be in our imaginations. We hear about things happening in the news reports... It’s Orwellian, but done with a sci-fi twist.”**

is entered, a purchase rung up, a call made. “Persons without the implants, which are called simcodes—and there are rebels in the film who have had their simcodes removed—are virtually without access to housing, food, or medical care,” explained Coates. “The simcodes are subtle; we see cameras here and there scanning as the people walk into a shop, and so forth. We see someone in ESA headquarters monitoring all this. It’s there, in the background, but it doesn’t beat people over the head.”

The look of the film is both organic and artificial; even the machines have been given a somewhat organic look, as has been almost ubiquitous in science fiction in recent years, perhaps beginning with *BABYLON 5*. People travel in “Bugs,” insectile transports that are the metrorail of the future. “It looked like a bug, people started calling it a bug. It was called Metra, but now it’s the Metra Bug,” said Coates. “It looks like what it can do: burrow, fly, hover. And it’s very utilitarian.”

One of the scenes being filmed on a soundstage in Manhattan Beach, California, takes place when the Bug lands, and Spence sees the ESA swarm a man and beat him. People just walk on like there’s nothing wrong. “Spence is trying to figure out what’s going on. He starts seeing people looking at him oddly,” said Coates.

In the scene being filmed Sinise and Stowe are on the Bug. Stowe wears a form-fitting, off-black coat which has a long, almost Victorian skirt, along with futuristic buckles and laces. It is *BLADERUNNER* meets Clive Barker.

“That coat wasn’t designed by costuming,” said Coates. “It’s available now, made by a new European designer. So you see, we

want this to be realistic. Futuristic, but possible.”

Central City, the film’s setting, was constructed by Coates from photographs of futuristic-looking buildings from around the world. A building from New York, one from London, one from Chicago, another from Hong Kong and so forth are compiled together to form a cityscape that is believable because the buildings already exist, just not all in the same place.

“We never see the aliens,” said Coates. “I’d rather they be in our imaginations. We hear about things happening in the news reports, and we see overlapping coverage on the screens. There’s a bombardment of imagery. It’s Orwellian, but done with a little twist, playing off of those fears.” Indeed, a video monitor runs a constant shifting-image, split-screen newscast outside the Bug.

“There’s so much text going on in these ubiquitous newscasts that you sort of think, ‘What are they really telling us? What’s really in these messages?’ In the whole look of this, we tried to make it seem very serious, without ever being campy.”

There is violence and fear in the film as would be expected considering its theme. “It’s a film that crosses over to its own subgenre, which is psychological suspense,” said Coates. “There’s a great line in the film where the D’Onofrio character says to Spence, ‘Are you listening to your own doubts?’ We all have doubts, and having that in common with the character in the movie really draws the viewer in.”

Wounded soldiers from off-world battles are shown being treated. “In the film, hospitals have become wartime trauma wards. Anything else can be treated at home, in this foreseeable future. Maya, Spence’s

wife [Stowe] is a hospital administrator. The nurses in the film are totally protected from patients, with latex that’s almost a body-condom type uniform. The hospital beds take vitals and dispense medications. So there’s very little human contact in medicine; it seems very sterile and cold.”

The film’s focus may be dystopian, but it’s not a horror film. “We’re trying to make this a drama that just happens to be science fiction,” said Coates. “It’s dark, but it’s not horror. And it’s not unrelieved darkness. There’s a really funny little bit with Tony Shalhoub in it.”

But though the story of *IMPOSTOR* has been expanded, nothing of its theme has been changed, the paranoia, disorientation and wartime tensions are all still there. Just as Phil Dick would have wanted them to be. □

Sinise and Madeleine Stowe, playing his wife. The film’s basis is a story by Philip K. Dick, whose work inspired *BLADE RUNNER* and *TOTAL RECALL*.





# THE ADVENTURES OF ROCKY + BULLWINKLE

**Jay Ward's sly '60s cartoon show gets reborn as a big-budget event movie.**

*By Joe Fordham*

After 40 years adorning lunch boxes, baseball hats and T-shirts, bobbing as a giant inflatable above New York's Macy's Thanksgiving Day parade and punning his way through 362 much-syndicated, minimally-animated, breakneck cartoon TV capers, the Moose that placed Jay Ward Productions on the map in 1959 finally makes his own big-time Hollywood screen debut. And if you were slightly disappointed in previous Ward-related movie adaptations—*GEORGE OF THE JUNGLE*, *DUDLEY DO-RIGHT*—have no fear. Bullwinkle J. Moose and his trusty airborne accomplice, Rocket J. Squirrel, have been given a CG makeover by Industrial Light and Magic and dropped into a colorful, slightly-stylized, live-action version of the real world.

As wrought by two-time Tony Award-winning director Des McAnuff (*COUSIN BETTE*) and production designer Gavin Bocquet (*STAR WARS: EPISODE ONE—THE PHANTOM MENACE*), it should be noted that the “real world” in question has been fashioned to accommodate Pottsylvania superspies, Boris Badenov, Natasha Fatale and their evil overlord, Fearless Leader, given human form by Jason Alexander, Renee Russo and Robert De Niro. Add to this a cast including newcomer Piper Perabo, as FBI agent Karen Sympathy; plus Randy Quaid as FBI Director Cappy von Trappment, Janeane Garofolo as ‘Phony Pictures Studios’ movie executive Minnie Mogul, Carl Reiner as studio boss P.G. Biggershot, James Rebhorn as U.S. President Signoff, Whoopi Goldberg as Judge Cameo in a fleeting courtroom scene and John Goodman as a highway patrolman who refuses to admit his striking resemblance to actor John



The movie equivalent of Ward's pun-filled verbal humor: “There’s a mole in the White House,” James Rebhorn as the President with a throw-away makeup effect designed by KNB Efx.

Goodman—and it is clear this is not only big-time movie making; this is “Jay-Rated” big-time movie making.

“This film really has captured the whole anarchic Jay Ward style of comedy,” said Keith Scott, who gives Bullwinkle voice throughout *THE ADVENTURES OF ROCKY AND BULLWINKLE* and also provides William Conrad’s non-stop wise-cracking narration (Conrad died in 1994). “Kenny Lonergan, who wrote the screenplay, has done a great job of capturing the spirit of the original Ward cartoon and he’s kept it totally clean; which is what Jay al-

ways used to say: Everything is Jay Rated!”

Tiffany Ward has run her father’s company since his passing in 1982. The concept of a Bullwinkle movie had been mooted by Universal when Ward Productions began their association with Universal Pictures’ Los Angeles CityWalk theme park in 1991, but wheels were finally set in motion by producer Jane Rosenthal of Tribeca Productions, who approached Tiffany Ward with an intriguing prospect on a visit to L.A. in 1992.

“I just loved Rocky and Bullwinkle,” said Rosenthal, who watched them while growing up in Providence, Rhode Island. “Natasha was wonderful, and Boris and the Fearless Leader. They were all great characters.” Fortunately for Rosenthal, De Niro began to share her enthusiasm, after some initial trepidation due to his unfamiliarity with the subject matter. “Once Bob started to watch the old shows, then all of a sudden it became real,” Rosenthal recalled.

Lonergan won the script assignment by trading on his own childhood recollections of the series’ re-runs. “One of the first things I asked Jane was did she want to be really faithful to the show, or did she want some new angle?” said Lonergan. “She immediately said that she wanted to be faithful to the show, and this proved to be the right way to go. I watched lots of tapes of the show and tried my best to convert that into movie beats, although I don’t believe I took any actual material from the series. I mostly tried to write in the exact style that I thought the original writers would have done. One of the first things you notice when you watch that show is that it’s wall-to-wall narration, which was extremely unusual for television, or for cartoons. It was very verbally oriented, with lots of puns,





Robert DeNiro as Fearless Leader, Jason Alexander as Boris, Rene Russo as Natasha and moose and squirrel courtesy of dimensional animation effects by ILM. Below: R&B must save the day when Fearless Leader's Really Bad TV Network begins turning people into vegetables, literally, makeup effects designed by KNB.





# BULLWINKLE

*Keith Scott on voicing Jay Ward's moose savant.*

*By Joe Fordham*

Keith Scott's identity has been a source of some confusion on the set of *THE ADVENTURES OF ROCKY AND BULLWINKLE*. Some people might say the same has been true of him for most of his professional life—and that is not a slight on Mr. Scott's reputation. Scott takes it as a compliment in fact, since he has become by trade one of the most sought-after voice artists in not only his home town of Sydney, Australia, but all over the world. But first, to set the record straight, Keith Scott is no relation to Bill Scott, writer of the original *ROCKY AND BULLWINKLE SHOW* and voice of the esteemed moose. "Bill used to say he was probably some long-lost uncle of mine," commented Scott.

Now 45, married with three grown daughters and still mostly resident in Sydney, Scott started his career as a voice actor for commercials and radio comedy. At age 20, he met William Hannah who was in town setting up the local Sydney branch of Hannah Barbara's animation studios. Scott found himself working with childhood heroes including the late Doris Butler (voice of Yogi bear), Paul Frees (Mr. Magoo, the original Boris Badenov) and the immortal Bugs himself, Mel Blanc. Scott later signed a six year contract to mimic Blanc's characters (Bugs, Daffy, Fudd, et al) while Warner Bros were establishing their foothold in Australia. His recent assignments have included voice work for Universal theme parks and Universal's Popeye licensing.

To say that Scott was in his element on the *BULLWINKLE* set was an understatement, or as he put it, "a dream come true." "Between takes I've been doing a lot of kidding around, doing voices for the crew," said Scott. "Being Hollywood, they love to hear me doing Orson Welles and Alfred Hitchcock, classic characters like that. This job really does allow you to be a big kid and have a ball."

Scott first seized an opportunity to turn his encyclopedic knowledge of Jay Ward Productions into a serious career move when the Wards joined forces with MCA in 1991. "I put together a demo tape of voice work and gave a copy to the agent for June Foray, who was the last surviving voice of the original Rocky and Natasha," said Scott. "June's agent immediately wanted to



The Aussie voice specialist also served as the film's technical advisor, and wrote a book on Ward, *The Moose That Roared*.

represent me and because I had somehow captured all the original voices so accurately they wanted me to be their new official sanctioned voice."

With Ward's daughter Tiffany Ward behind him, Scott began to earn double-duty as historical advisor and voice artist for the first live-action Jay Ward-themed feature film. "I imitated Paul Frees as the Narrator voice in *GEORGE OF THE JUNGLE*," Scott explained. "Disney flew me out from Australia to record that after everything was completed. I did the same for Universal with *DUDLEY DO-RIGHT*."

Filming *THE ADVENTURES OF ROCKY & BULLWINKLE* has been a unique one for Scott, paring him with a host of celebrity comedy performers and actors of the caliber of Jason Alexander, Renee Russo and De Niro. "It's been amazing to meet some of my childhood heroes," said Scott. "I've met Jonathan Winters, Billy Crystal and Whoopi Goldberg. De Niro has been very pleasant, and it was my observation that he was rather shy. I think he's one of those accomplished actors who's really happier in character and as himself he just tends to shy away from any publicity. But I think that's just because he's so focused on acting. It was kind of funny, because when he'd complete a take as this mad Nazi Prussian character, he would look over to myself and Susie, the Rocky reader, with a little grin on his face as if to say, 'Was that

funny?'"

Scott laughed, but emphasized his great respect for the acting tradition. "Voice actors are a little under-rated because there's an element of thinking that it's just a lark. If it's properly done, it is real acting. You're acting with your whole body, doing the shoulder shrugs and the facial expressions, getting into the character. It's the modern-day extension of radio acting. And before television, radio was the big medium for actors. It really is audio acting. To get into the character you really have to capture the meaning of the lines. Without that, voice acting tends to just sound like a vocal distortion rather than a character. It doesn't have much imagination to it."

To prepare for his role as the moose of the hour, Scott not only had his years of familiarity with the show itself to draw from. He was also able to mainline inspiration from a more im-

mediate source. "I spent a lot of time with Bill Scott, of course, but he also gave me all of the original session tapes," said Scott. "These weren't only the episodes, they also had all the kidding around in between, so I could really get into the head of how they thought about these characters. I studied those for several years, and that really helped me realize, as Bill Scott always said, Bullwinkle has a lot more going on upstairs than you actually might think."

The final bonus for Keith Scott, on his rollercoaster ride with his childhood heroes, is that the release of *THE ADVENTURES OF ROCKY AND BULLWINKLE* has miraculously been timed to coincide with the release of a pet project that he has been nurturing for five years, *The Moose That Roared*, the definitive volume to end all volumes chronicling the work of Jay Ward Productions. "My book is coming out in June from St. Martin's Press," said Scott. "It's the whole history of Jay Ward Empire, from Crusader Rabbit right up to the end of production, after *GEORGE OF THE JUNGLE* when they did another ten years of just Quaker breakfast cereal commercials—Kwisk and Quake, Captain Crunch and all that—so it really is a serious reference career book. The history of a studio, with profiles of all the animators and writers and voice actors, and a lot of rare stuff with a big reference section at the end. It's been a labor of love!" □



some consciously bad puns. There were a lot of references to the fact that it was a TV show. The actual episodes were also always very odd and unusual in the way they advanced the plot."

Although Rosenthal and screenwriter Kenneth Lonergan had agreed that the screenplay would dictate, through logic of its own, that Boris and Natasha and their Fearless Leader would appear in three dimensions—without giving too much away, this stipulation came attached to their movie contract—it remained to be seen how a flying squirrel and a six-foot-tall, bipedal, talking moose would be manifest on screen. Walkabout character costumes were not a consideration, as HOWARD THE DUCK had proved in 1986. Warner Bros.-styled talking rabbits had been more effectively integrated into live-action in WHO FRAMED ROGER RABBIT? in 1988. But Rocky and Bullwinkle were far removed from Tex Avery or Chuck Jones. The question remained, as it had with the screenplay, how to capture the characters in all their imperfectly animated glory and drop them believably into the real world for a post-JURASSIC audience?

"Everybody we talked to asked us how were you going to make a flat 2D graphic guy translate into 3D?" said Industrial Light and Magic animation supervisor David Andrews. "When I met with Tiffany Ward, I looked at her across the table and said, 'No problem! Just step outside on Sunset Boulevard and look up, the answer is right there. I've been seeing it all my life.'" Andrews took his inspiration from the Bullwinkle statue that has stood above the entrance to the Ward Studios since 1963. "A third dimension really didn't scare me, although I had to convince everybody that the characters would translate properly, but I believed, so I hope that I'll be able to convince everyone."

Andrews' passion for the project won ILM the opportunity to begin animation tests at their San Raphael studios in Northern California during the summer of 1998. As the technical parameters governing the

## DAVID ANDREWS, ILM ANIMATOR

**"A third dimension didn't scare me, although I had to convince everybody that the characters would translate properly, but I believed, so I hope that I'll be able to convince everyone."**



We're not in Balzac anymore: director Des McAnuff (r), Tony-winning director of "Cousin Bette," collaborates with ILM animation supervisor David Andrews.

animated stars were thrashed out over a period of five months, the two key visualizers for the production were also assigned—the director and the production designer.

"I received the script from my agents at Creative Artists and they told me they thought it was a project I might be able to do," recalled director Des McAnuff. "I was very, very skeptical, but I read it, immediately loved it and said to my wife, which I never do, 'Tell me if I'm crazy, but I think this is really a terrific script that might be a lot of fun to do.' I honestly never really believed I had a shot at winning this assignment because I had really minimal experience with visual effects. In any case, I met with the studio and Tribeca, gave them my ideas, how I envisaged the film, casting ideas and so on, and had a very good meeting with Kevin Misher at Universal and with Jane Rosenthal in New York. They put all their candidates through a series of hoops and then in one of our meetings Robert De Niro was there. Three days later they offered me the job."

With only one feature film to

his resume, and that being an art house period drama, McAnuff joked about his transition to Frostbite Falls—"From Balzac to Bullwinkle!"—although, ironically, his literary and theatrical credentials set him in good stead to rise to the new challenge. "The experience directing ROCKY AND BULLWINKLE has really been about visual story-telling, rather than anything too cerebral," stated the director, "although I must say I think the writing is superb. Kenny Lonergan did a fabulous job in his screenplay mining this foundation of great comedy that goes back to the Jay Ward days. The original Ward Studio writers were terrific, ambitious, loony writers, you know; and I think we've maintained that verbal quality with this film, as well as delivering the action. The humor is certainly concerned with language and dialects and puns and clever word play—although that is not to say that it has anything at all to do with Balzac! I just like to try new things and take on challenges, and while this may not relate directly to my last film, COUSIN BETTE, I've always had a passion for doing comedy

in my stage work. If you were to really analyze BULLWINKLE's humor, it is maybe even linked to the literary tradition of Abram Burrows' HOW TO SUCCEED IN BUSINESS WITHOUT REALLY TRYING—which, oddly enough, was written around the same time as the original Bullwinkle show. It has the same kind of irreverent sense of humor, lampooning everything and really never taking itself seriously. So this has not been completely foreign."

McAnuff began by immersing himself in the Bullwinkle world. "The first thing I did when I got to the lot was I asked Tiffany Ward for every Rocky and Bullwinkle episode there was and built a library, which everyone in the production over time referred to. Our choreographer, Lynne Hockney [TITANIC], our dialect coach, Tim Monich [THE TALENTED MR. RIPLEY], our director of photography, Tom Ackerman [JUMANJI], and all our designers spent a lot of time with the original cartoons. Not to necessarily ape them, but to use them as an influence and a reference bible."

**M**cAnuff quickly fell in step with Lonergan's evolving screenplay. "I'd watched the shows as a kid so I was not completely ignorant, but I was a long way from being

The late Jay Ward, whose comic lunacy and wit made the original cartoons cultural icons in the '60s.





# NARRATOR

## *Kenneth Lonergan on scripting the cartoon revival.*

By Joe Fordham

At age 38, *ROCKY & BULLWINKLE* screenwriter Kenneth Lonergan has one New York play to his credit, "This is Our Youth," and two other screenplays. His first, *ANALYZE THIS*, garnered in excess of \$100 million in its first six months of release. Lonergan made his feature film directorial debut earlier this year, and tied for the Grand Jury Prize at the Sundance Film Festival 2000, helming his own script for *YOU CAN COUNT ON ME*—single mother (Laura Linney) forced to deal with her loser brother (Mark Ruffalo).

*ANALYZE THIS* introduced Lonergan to Tribeca producer Jane Rosenthal as a spec screenplay submission for the young writer just out of NYU in 1992. Lonergan was flattered, thrilled and a little confused when Rosenthal offered him the opportunity of adapting Jay Ward's moose and squirrel to the big screen, starring Robert De Niro. "I guess De Niro just likes doing different things," said Lonergan, with a laugh. Once over the initial shock, Lonergan found himself in tune with Rosenthal's vision for the film, keeping true to the spirit of the original cartoon. He immersed himself in the source material, met with Keith Scott, voice artist and archivist for Jay Ward Studios, and eventually developed a completely new Bullwinkle story, updating the 30-year-old cartoon characters by taking the time lapse by the horns.

"I wanted to explain who Rocky and Bullwinkle are," said Lonergan. "This was just part of the exposition, as you would have with any movie, or any story. You don't assume that your audience knows who everyone is; although, with these characters, we could assume some recognition. We set



Staying faithful to the original, Lonergan sought to retain the cartoon personas of Boris and Natasha, fleshed-out by Rene Russo and Jason Alexander.

the story up so that it would be fun for those who knew the original show and hopefully fun for those who didn't. All they needed to know, for the dramatic purposes of our movie, was that these were very popular cartoon characters from the 1960s, so we very clearly dramatized that."

Part of the plan to bring the moose and squirrel into the year 2000 was to set them loose upon the modern world in the same way that the original series had lampooned Cold War politics—with outrageous puns and off-the-wall tomfoolery, all presented in an overly melodramatic, Republic serial style.

"If you look at the old show," said Lonergan, "they never target anyone specifically. They occasionally made a funny name out of someone's name, but I think it was more political humor. There was a little less of that in our final screenplay, than in some earlier drafts, but I think a fair amount of our satirical targets remained. There was a lot of satire based on movie conventions, Hollywood in-jokes, and there were a fair number of political jokes. A lot of jokes about how people spend their whole lives watch-

ing TV. Like the old show, it's on a fairly silly level, but I hope that, like the old show, it has some resonance beyond being a goofy comedy. I wouldn't call it black humor, because it's fairly good natured, but I think there were still a number of good jokes in our final script."

Lonergan, Rosenthal and De Niro all were in agreement that the appeal of *THE ROCKY AND BULLWINKLE SHOW* lay in its unique blend of loony wit and social bite, although this was never overt. "I think the feeling was that we should merely emulate the show in the way that it made fun of society—whether it was businessmen or politicians or TV," said Lonergan. "Our project was a movie, so we decided to make fun of movies; although we actually made fun of TV as well, because it was so easy to do! But there was no particular agenda. I think that was also partly what made people like *ROCKY AND BULLWINKLE* more than the average show. It was satirical. It was not just an animal show. It took on all sorts of interesting topics. There was one episode where the economy was ruined because there was a flood of breakfast cereal box-

tops. It was just a different ball game than a Tom and Jerry cartoon."

A further aspect of the Rocky and Bullwinkle universe that, for Lonergan, had to remain was its mad, frenetic pace. "That was one of the best things I liked about the show," said Lonergan, "it moved a million miles a minute. I thought that this movie should do the same, so I tried very hard to make that the case." The challenge for the screenwriter became to create a rhythm that could be sustained, while allowing the audience to breathe. "I don't think you could do a full-length movie of the cartoon and not have it drive you crazy," Lonergan observed. "This film is very densely packed. There are other characters in addition to the moose and squirrel and three villains, like our heroine, Karen Sympathy, who's an FBI agent sent to help stop Fearless Leader; but the whole thing moves fast."

An epiphany came for Lonergan while struggling with a plot point during the writing process. "I remember one time I was having a little bit of a hard time writing a helicopter chase," said Lonergan. "I was bored with the scene because it was not a very interesting helicopter chase, so I went back and looked at the old show and I realized that I had been barking up the wrong tree. I was watching a Peabody and Sherman episode, actually, where they were back in World War One and they were being attacked by a battalion of German troops with bayonets. They escaped by putting hotdogs on the Germans' bayonets. They all had to rush off and find sauerkraut and that's how they got rid of them. It was not particularly funny but I thought it was interesting. Rather than trapping them or digging a ditch and having them fall into it, they escaped like that, and I realized



**“On the other hand, Rocky and Bullwinkle are windows to our own times and that’s the fun of it; they’re Cold War idealists that have been parachuted into the madness of today.”**

Honing the script: Loneragan with director Des McAnuff and Tribeca producer Jane Rosenthal, who assigned Loneragan on the strength of his *ANALYZE THIS*.

this was the way the characters always solved a problem in the old TV show. It was always with a joke or a pun or a twisting of reality, something absurd rather than just a chase. Once I had refreshed my memory about that, I had a new perspective writing action scenes. A lot of my problems in the script were dealt with by the characters making a pun, visual or verbal, and they just move on. It was very liberating, playing with the language and the fact that this was a comedy. It solved all your dramatic problems for you. From that point on, *ROCKY AND BULLWINKLE* became a lot of fun to write.”

After sixth months writing, and rights and permissions problems which necessitated the project being pitched twice to a change of guard at Universal, Loneragan’s first draft was greeted with enthusiasm by the studio and by Ward Studios. “We consulted with Tiffany Ward, who’s the daughter of Jay Ward, the creator of the original show, pretty much every step of the way to make sure we were being faithful to the original vision,” said Loneragan. “When she said she liked the story, and every time she gave her approval it made us feel good, like we were shopping in the right part of the store.”

Director Des McAnuff joined the project two screenplay drafts later. Read-throughs followed with the principal performers, affording McAnuff and Loneragan the opportunity to hone the comedy pacing. “The read through was really thrilling,” Loneragan recalled. “I met Robert DeNiro and Jason Alexander, which was very exciting, particularly when he said he wanted to come see my play.” Read-throughs were also crucial when weighing the impact of the narration, which added disproportionate length to the screenplay on the page. “That was a little hard for me to gauge,” Loneragan admitted. “When you have a short paragraph of narration at the top of a page, then right under that you have a description of what’s happening, that takes half a page, even though the actual screen-time is only the time that the narrator is speaking. There was quite a lot of that, so we found that each page timed out about half as long as it seemed.”

Loneragan developed an ear for interplay of cartoon voices. “While I was writing I didn’t do the voices aloud. Occasionally I might talk out loud to test the Narrator, if I was having a little trouble with a sentence. I had to hear everything in my mind’s ear to be sure it was right.” □

knowledgeable,” recalled McAnuff. “In our first meeting I had this hankering to introduce some of the other characters from the show into Frostbite Falls but I came to realize Jay wouldn’t have wanted crossovers because Rocky and Bullwinkle occupy their own part of the universe in the show. So we avoided introducing other characters from the other [segments] and I think that was actually a good suggestion. I didn’t want to do anything that violated the original.”

To further plant the seeds of the source material in their audience’s minds, the filmmakers elected to open their film with a cartoon prologue—realized in true Jay Ward style by San Francisco’s wacky animation outfit, Wild Brain, Inc.—set in Bullwinkle’s cartoon hometown of Frostbite Falls.

To accommodate the deliberately tongue-in-cheek Wardian connection, the design of the real world inherited a cartoon flavor of its own. “There’s a line in the script where the narrator actually talks about the fact that there’s a certain place between the real world and the cartoon world, and that certain place is Hollywood,” McAnuff laughed, clearly enjoying the absurdity of the world he was creating. “In a sense our film is always inside a Hollywood movie and that creates the landscape. On the other hand, Rocky and Bullwinkle are windows to our own times and that’s the fun of it: they’re Cold War idealists that have been parachuted into today and so one of the things the film is about is looking at our own times through their eyes. The setting of our film is very much the world we live in, but there’s a minimalist quality to everything that evokes the cartoon world. It’s the modern world tidied up and organized. I think there’s a great deal of integrity to the work of Gavin Bocquet, our production designer, and

Marlene Stewart, our costume designer, who have both worked very hard to achieve this consistency and style.”

On shore leave between two *STAR WARS*—*THE PHANTOM MENACE* and the film that Internet rumor proposes to be called *JEDI DESTINY*—Bocquet joined the *BULLWINKLE* team in August 1998. “We had just finished *MENACE* and we knew that episode two was going to be starting in about June or July 1999, so this picture just fitted in,” Bocquet recalled. “I had to fight for the assignment, of course, they didn’t just hand me the job, but it was a really nice script and it was perfect timing.” Bocquet’s Lucasfilm credentials include the production design of *RADIOLAND MURDERS* and his Emmy Award-winning art direction for *THE YOUNG INDIANA JONES CHRONICLES*. Hailing from a design education at Newcastle Polytechnic and the Royal College of Art in London, then art department

DeNiro as Fearless Leader, sold on doing the cartoon adaptation after watching Ward’s ‘60s TV animation.





credits on *THE ELEPHANT MAN*, *RETURN OF THE JEDI*, *RETURN TO OZ*, *YOUNG SHERLOCK HOLMES* and *EMPIRE OF THE SUN*, amongst others, and a feature debut as production designer on Steven Soderberg's visually stunning *KAFKA*, it is easy to see how the soft-spoken Englishman landed his *BULLWINKLE* "vacation."

Bocquet outlined director Des McAnuff's design approach to delineate the two worlds, cartoon and live-action: "We wanted to give the real world a stylistic or caricatured look, but not one that would throw the audience off. They needed to know that they were either in cartoon land or in the real world. The script involved a lot of what I called classic American icons. Imagery from water towers, to college campuses, to prisons, to TV studios, to film studios. We tried to select what we perceived to the absolute ideal example of each image, to typify what people would accept as being that particular icon."

**T**ouring the soundstages at Warner Bros. Studios, Burbank, where designs were translated to real world terms, Bocquet emphasized the critical factors required to bring the visual plan to life. "We had to be careful in

ILM animation supervisor David Andrews stands-in for Bullwinkle during filming with Piper Perabo.



## DES MCANUFF, DIRECTOR

**"The setting of our film is very much the world we live in, but there's a minimalist quality to everything that evokes a cartoon world. It's a modern world tidied up and organized."**



Rocky's voice, June Foray, writer and Bullwinkle voice Bill Scott and Ward during production of the original show that ran 326 episodes from 1959-1964.

our designs because we knew that by building maybe 50% of the sets, we would have to find the other 50% as existing locations," Bocquet explained. "In a set you can basically create your own environment. You can do what you want with color, shape, texture and be very bold. Obviously, on location that's all a bit harder to find, so we had to be careful to draw a line where the sets that we had built and designed and produced sat very happily with the locations we found."

Bocquet also noted that McAnuff's shooting style complimented the look. "Des was very keen on reflecting the directing styles of the Bullwinkle cartoons," said Bocquet, "the way that initially a scene is played as a very static master shot, then you punch in, then you move back. There aren't many big camera moves, or crane shots. In fact, when we leave the cartoon world in the beginning of the movie, the first live-action shot in the film is a completely graphic, symmetrical image of one of our characters, Minnie Mogul (Janeane Garofolo), sitting behind a desk. You almost think for a moment that

you're still in the flat cartoon world, then the camera immediately moves into this ridiculously exaggerated 270° track around the back of her, making a very effective visual statement that we have moved from the cartoon world into live-action. Des was very aware that he was trying to pay off that sort of connection between the two worlds."

As in the original TV show, visual and verbal puns abound in Rocky and Bullwinkle's big-screen adventure, resulting in a lively collaborative atmosphere in Bocquet's art department. Steeped in Moose and Squirrel lore—Bocquet personally viewed 60 Rocky and Bullwinkle episodes in his first two weeks on the show—and armed with Lonergan's droll and savvy screenplay, McAnuff welcomed contributions from all involved, the best of which were layered into the production as background detail and set dressing throughout.

"Some of the young folks in the art department came up with some really wacky place names for the film," said Bocquet. "We made lists because we needed lots of shop names for Cowtip, this little two-bit Western town

that they end up during their road trip across America. We had to come up with our own petrol station, so we came up with 'Pump 'Er Up Gas.' Then we had 'Beefy Buns' as our burger place. 'Munchy Mart' was our convenience store. On the doors to RBTV we had a sign, 'V.I.P.s Only—Very Important Pottsylvaniaans.' We also had a nice one for a scene at Wossamatta U, Bullwinkle's alma mater college from the old cartoon, where Bullwinkle has been clobbered by something so they have to go into the infirmary. We didn't know what to call the infirmary so we just put a big red cross on the door of the college when we got to the location, then we came up with the idea of putting a sign up top: 'J Ward'—just the letter 'J,' then 'Ward.' I hope the audience gets that."

Despite their evil intentions, the relative innocence of Pottsylvaniaan spies Boris and Natasha is also reflected in their choice of hardware. "There was an interesting difference between Boris and Natasha and Fearless Leader," commented Bocquet. "All of Fearless Leader's equipment was the height of modern-day technology, cutting-edge satellite dishes and giant TV screens. Boris and Natasha's weapons, on the other hand, were still cartoon weapons—big cannons and pop guns. They don't even have guns as such. When they try to stop Karen Sympathy, our heroine, they throw sticks of dynamite which have 'Dynamite' written on them, and they have a big round bomb with 'Bomb' written on it. That's their technology. So there was quite a nice dialogue between Boris and Fearless Leader. It's only when you talk about it that you realize how much fun it is!"

Joining the production for the studio shoot at Warner Burbank were an oddball group of human vegetables and a furry animatronic rodent, all created by Greg Nicotero's creature effects team at KNB Efx. "Fearless Leader has our heroine and Rocky held prisoner," explained Nicotero, while waiting for a second unit night shoot to begin. "They ask him

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# ROCKY

## June Foray on her return to Frosbite Falls.

By Joe Fordham

It's not often that you get to meet a legend. May 5, 1999, Ernie Malick, unit publicist for *THE ADVENTURES OF ROCKY AND BULLWINKLE*, arranged for a small group of international press to share a craft services tent with a member of the cast who had completed her main duties for the movie months earlier. The small but elegant woman, still sprightly in her 80s, inspired director Des McAnuff to surrender his director's chair and was greeted with veneration by the crew. This was the grand dame of the so-called "Golden Age" of animation, June Foray, here to answer questions about her latest voice over assignment, reprising the role she first voiced 40 years ago, the flying furry freedom fighter, Rocket J. Squirrel.

For hysterical porpoises—to quote Yosemite Sam—Foray provided a synopsis of her credits, with some entertaining diversions: "When I was a kid, I was the Lucifer cat in *CINDERELLA* (1950), I did the Indian Squaw in *PETER PAN* (1953), I did Knot Head and Splinter for Walter Lantz and *Witch Hazel* for Disney."

Foray began slipping into character, a quivery vibrato: "So then I started to do Granny for *LOONEY TUNES* (1955, onwards). I also did Goofy's wife—a croaky groan—"with that kind of a heavy voice"—she recovered—"I did Daffy Duck's wife with that voice, Yosemite Sam's wife. I was always the mean old broad, a loud mouth." Foray's other "old broads" include Grandma Fa in *MULAN* (1998), for which she fittingly received a Grammy nomination, all the Fairy Godmothers and broken princesses in Jay Ward's *FRACTURED FAIRY TALES*, Ursula in *GEORGE OF THE JUNGLE*, Marigold in *Tom Slick* and a particularly creepy younger, mean little dame in *THE TWILIGHT ZONE* (1959). "Remember the doll who killed Telly Savalas?" asked Foray, a twinkle in her eye. "I was the voice of Talky Tina. Shortly after I did that, Mattel Toys loved the voice so much that they asked me to be the original voice for their own talking doll, Chatty Cathy. They're coming out with another version of that now."

Despite her stellar cast of characters, Foray is arguably best remembered for her



Foray, the original cartoon voice of the Flying Squirrel, returns to lend the film her vocal talents and reminisce about Jay Ward.

characterizations of Rocky and Natasha for *Rocky and Bullwinkle*. She has particularly fond memories of work at Jay Ward Studios, that began with her recordings 1959 through 1961 for ABC, first as *ROCKY AND HIS FRIENDS*, then 1961 to 1964 as *THE ROCKY AND BULLWINKLE SHOW* for NBC. From there, the cartoon classic passed to syndication, then to Nickelodeon, to its current home on Time Warner's Cartoon Network.

"It seemed almost sacrilegious to take the money we had so much fun back then," recalled Foray. "Jay never was a very perceptive man. He knew what he liked. Bill Scott was the head writer, and he was the voice of Bullwinkle and Dudley Do-Right and Fearless Leader and Mister Peabody. Whatever made Jay laugh, that went in the script, and he just sat in the control room laughing every time. Bill Scott, Paul Frees, Bill Conrad and I would all have different mikes and we would read through the material once, then record it. The only time we would have to do it over was if we were three or four seconds over length, or if we laughed too much. But it was so much fun. We would record about five or six segments in one night. Jay liked to be in the office all day, so we usually had our recording sessions late afternoon, or at 6 o'clock, and we would have the studio for about two hours. Most of the two hours were filled up telling jokes and laughing, and then we'd read the

script through, record, and Jay would say, 'That's a wrap.' Every recording was delightful."

One of the series' regulars, Edward Everett Horton, who provided the narration for *Fractured Fairy Tales*, brought a slice of classic Hollywood elegance to the raucous proceedings. As Foray recalled, Horton was a veteran comedy performer, theatrically trained, with over 120 films to his name, dating back to 1922. "Usually picture people can't come in, pick up a script and read it right away and do a good job the way that people from radio or voiceovers could," said Foray. "But Edward, who was in his 70s, he'd come in, pick up the script and read it right through and say, 'Well, I gotta go play tennis,' making that funny little face that he always made."

Foray brought her own professionalism to bear when recording her *Rocky* voiceover with Keith Scott, voice of Bullwinkle for the new Universal movie. After one morning's work, prior to commencement of principal photography—months before any animation could begin—her work with the squeaky squirrel was done; with an open-ended understanding that she may return for 'looping' or voice replacement sessions much later in post-production.

Foray is also providing Natasha's voice for the cartoon segments that bookend the film, although she remained impressed by Russo's own very physical take on the live-action role. "We had a couple of readings where Renee asked me to read a particular line in Natasha's voice, which I did, but she has been remarkable," said Foray. "She has the voice down quite well. And Robert De Niro is great as Fearless Leader," she added. "Usually, when you see him in character, 'he talks like dis all de time,' gangster-style, but here he has a German accent. Jason Alexander is also terrific as Boris, and Keith Scott is another very talented man. When he does his Bullwinkle you would never guess that he's Australian. He just loses that completely."

As for Rocky, Foray reassured her fans, the courageous squirrel has not changed. "In animation you never grow up! It's *PETER PAN!*" she exclaimed, in squirrel voice. "Mr. Moose and I are in retirement now, but we occasionally come to Hollywood." □



# ILM EFFECTS

*Fleshing-out the cartoon stars for the big screen.*

By Joe Fordham

Visitors to the set of Universal's *ROCKY AND BULLWINKLE* were often mistakenly excited by the sight of a giant bendy toy moose and a knee-high squirrel propped in director's chairs or seated behind the wheel of a dilapidated Chrysler Sebring. But excited cries of, "Look, there he is!" and much finger pointing were all in vain. Crew members on set treated the rubber effigies with detachment and—yes, goshdarnit—respect because, after all, these weren't just any moose and squirrel, these were American icons and pop culture stars Bullwinkle J. Moose and Rocket J. Squirrel making their feature film debut...but they also knew that these were just the camera department's stand-ins, not the real stars of the show. Visual effects supervisor Roger Guyett, a tall and affable young Englishman, and animation supervisor David Andrews, an equally youthful but award-winning veteran of Canada's famed National Film Board animation program, were the real-life guardians of the actual moose and squirrel, as reborn from the same computers that hatched Jar Jar Binks and hordes of Gungan armies last summer.

Guyett and Andrews are a double-team who have shared duties for Industrial Light and Magic before. Andrews joined the San Raphael facility in 1993, Guyett followed in 1994 after moving to the United States in 1993 to accept a position at Pacific Data Images. Their first ILM project together was *CASPER* in 1995, which resulted in over 40 minutes of 3D computer generated character animation—meaning: built in wire-frame in virtual "3D" computer space. Guyett was senior technical director for the project, Andrews was computer graphics animator. They refined



**Bullwinkle gets up close and personal with Piper Perabo as FBI agent Karen Sympathy, striving for a natural interaction between effect and live actors.**

these roles for Tim Burton's mad Martians in *MARS ATTACKS!* in 1996, Guyett as digital effects supervisor, Andrews as animation supervisor. Guyett most recently won a BAFTA Award for co-supervising the visual effects of *SAVING PRIVATE RYAN*, Andrews was most recently animation supervisor for *SMALL SOLDIERS*. Their combined experience has set them in good stead to bring Jay Ward's moose and squirrel to Hollywood.

"The visual effects for *THE ADVENTURES OF ROCKY AND BULLWINKLE* was very much a team effort," said Guyett. "Dave was really an absolutely ideal person to supervise the animation because he had a great understanding of Rocky and Bullwinkle. That's always the first step that you need to get into the characters and how they behave. Dave started on the project in March of 1998. That was his first meeting. I got going later, in about July. From that point, both of us came down to L.A. to meet quite regularly with Des [McAnuff], the director, working out the storyboards for the whole movie because we were

planning so many visual effects and animation shots. This kind of movie is difficult to organize. It can also be financially crippling. Des was very keen to work everything out in pre-production until we came up with a plan that everyone was happy with, while at the same time he was working with the writer. So Des and Dave and I went through the story sequence by sequence, talking about what Rocky and Bullwinkle would be doing under various circumstances, how we could build the shots, what kind of effects we could do and what we could achieve with the animation. Des hadn't done a lot of visual effects work before, but Dave and I were able to lend our experience to help him work out what effects were possible, what could be done, what was hard and what was easy. It became a real collaboration."

As the content of Bullwinkle's visual effects evolved, so did the style, under David Andrews' guiding force. "Bill Scott, the man who created the original voice of Bullwinkle, called him an intelligent goof," said Andrews. "I used that as my approach for Bullwinkle's

personality, to think of him as goofy, but give him more brains, to maybe give him the qualities of an idiot savant. He's goofy and funny and always off the cuff, but he always manages to save the day miraculously, so he's got something going on."

Personality was one thing; animation another. Nobody, least of all Jay Ward, would have claimed the quality of the original TV series animation was in any way high quality. It was technically dire. In fact, it was the first example of Hollywood farming out animation duties to cheaper labor on foreign shores, Mexico City to be exact. When mistakes came back, there was no time or budget to correct them. Mistraced lines remained, incorrectly painted animation cels popped on and off, photographed out of sequence. But, that was Bullwinkle. It was all about the writing, right? Understandably, Universal demanded an upfront sample of how their leading men would appear two stories tall, sharing screen space with Robert De Niro. "Bullwinkle has always been limited animation," said Andrews, graciously. "We had to make him full animation, because this was a feature film, and because he was also in a live-action realm for the first time. If the world had believable gravity, then Bullwinkle had to behave that way too—unlike he did in the original 2D animation. So, we had to be true to this world, but we also had to be true to him."

Guyett concurred: "We had to make it not such a visual jump from the original animation that all of a sudden you didn't really know who you were looking at. Des was very keen to give the animation a slightly more modern edge, but do this in a way that would preserve the quality of the characters but at the same time bring them up to date. What we did,





ILM visual effects supervisor Roger Guyett and animation supervisor David Andrews sought to maintain an appropriate cartoon look for their "2 1/2D" effects.

very specifically, is to make sure the characters were interacting with their environment in a way that people felt as though they were really in the scene. That was really important, otherwise people would start to think there's something funny visually. So we gave them a lot of visual cues in the movie, casting shadows, interacting with people and objects, while at the same time they have a slightly more cartoony quality than the sort of 3D animation that you see in JURASSIC PARK. We used a lot of cartoon style in the animation, and that was kind of the fun of it. The whole movie actually has a slightly cartoony flavor, so we are able to push that aspect, like in WHO FRAMED ROGER RABBIT? where the characters could do the kind of stuff that you'd only see in cartoons."

ROGER RABBIT is a name that continually comes up in conversation in any discussion of animation integrated into live-action, although, as Andrews pointed out, the technique is as old as film, dating back to David Fleischer's silent OUT OF

THE INKWELL shorts (1918), later aped by Disney in his more commercially successful Alice films (1924). "There's ANCHORS AWEIGH (1945), with Gene Kelly dancing with Tom and Jerry, Dick Van Dyke and the penguins in MARY POPPINS (1964), there's a whole evolution to this day," said Andrews. "Our 3D computer animation is different from ROGER RABBIT, so it's a new step for us in that we've created a different look. There's a total ruse in this picture that these characters get transported to this world, they don't have to look like they're from here, even though

they behave according to our rules, so we had a little freedom there. We're somewhere in between ROGER RABBIT and JURASSIC PARK. Rocky and Bullwinkle don't have a realistic looking skin, they have more of a graphic quality. You still feel a dimension to Bullwinkle, because he is a 3D model, as T-Rex was, but Bullwinkle has a line around him too, like Roger Rabbit. So he's new for us in that we haven't ever done this kind of 2-1/2D look with our 3D models."

Andrews' test employed key-framed digital animation (hand-positioned progressive

poses, with successive frames plotted by computer) of a 3D Bullwinkle walk cycle (the moose, in character, trudging an endless loop). This was accompanied by a test of a fully shaded Bullwinkle composited into a live-action background. Results gave ILM a place from which to initiate conversation, and a greenlight for basic animation techniques that moved into higher gear once principal photography was underway.

"We developed a two-step process," said Andrews. "I would start by drawing a pencil animatic on top of the live-action images. I then showed that to the director as take one, so that he can see the composition, he can see the character posing, but he doesn't see the animation at that stage. Once he bought off on the pencil animatic, then I went into take one of 3D. At that point we add the third dimension, introducing the fake computer camera that matched the character with the live-action camera move, then we started to add the full 3D look of the character, adding the animation."

Andrews explained his

ILM's Roger Guyett takes the Bullwinkle role, blocking out car crash action on the set, using a temporary inflatable doll to show the position for Rocky.







While maintaining a cartoony look, ILM sought to give Rocky and Bullwinkle realism by enmeshing them in the scene with visual cues, shadows and close interaction, heading cross-country in a satirical, Jay Ward-inspired road movie.

role on set: "That was where I did what I call my layouts. This is similar to work that's done in a 2D animation studio, where you sit there with your storyboards, you blow them up and sketch out a bigger layout that allows you to work out your perspectives. You then plot your animation with poses through that, then give that layout package to your animators. Being here as an animator who knows how to do a layout-base in 2D, I'm able to translate that into a 3D world. I'm measuring the steps it takes for me to get from here to a tree and around behind it, and I incorporate that into my layout."

Guyett meanwhile chaperoned the shoot with his coordinator and match-move supervisor, a relatively tiny crew considering the scale of the production. "Nowadays we try to be as low-profile and transparent to the crew as possible," said Guyett. "There was a time where if you were shooting motion control you were very limited to the number of set-ups you could do a day. For a shoot like this, they want to do 30 set-ups a day, not five, so the cam-

era is pretty much free and able to do whatever Des wants it to do. When we went out on the road, they were able to use any techniques they wanted, Steadicam or anything, because we now have the software to match all those moves. We also had a lot of other effects, in addition to the character animation—there was a lot of very complicated bluescreen work, flying work, we're adding CG helicopters, we had Rocky and Bullwinkle in a lot of interesting locations, New York, Washington D.C., Chicago, so there is a big scope to the movie. It's been a lot of fun, because we were dealing with such great characters."

Guyett also had high praise for his human co-stars. "We would sometimes try to give the actors physical objects to interact with, like if they have to pick Rocky or Bullwinkle up we would try and give them as many visual aids as possible, but other times they were just totally imaginary," said Guyett. "It was amazing how incredibly good Robert De Niro, Rene Russo and Jason Alexander were at that. We would start ex-

plaining the shot to them, thinking this might be a problem, and they would start coming up with ideas of their own, quite often suggesting solutions of their own that really helped us out. They also helped us carry the performance of our animated characters to react off what they were doing. They could speed up a scene or slow it down to help us find ways to bend time and give us variations. The simplest things are often the hardest, like eyelines, particularly if

a character is moving around a lot. That's why you rehearse and give the actors lots of marks, so there's a degree of trust involved."

As scenes took shape in editor Dennis Virkler's cutting room, Andrews supervised a fluctuating team of 15-20 animators back at San Raphael, who began animating scenes May 5, 1999. Over the course of eight months, post-production at ILM resulted in 30 minutes of animation, with the first fully integrated, 2-1/2D animated characters achieved in August 1999. "With 20 animators animating two characters, I had to really watch over them carefully to maintain a style," said Andrews. "Bullwinkle was really the most fun to animate, Rocky was the straight guy, but I couldn't cast one lead animator to Bullwinkle, have him assisted by a group of junior animators, then have the other ten animators do Rocky for eight months. I had to cast each scene to each person."

McAnuff paid twice-weekly visits to the animation team as the scenes took shape. "Once Des approved the animatics, I definitely knew where he was going, so when we took the performance into animation we could go straight to the mark," said Andrews. "You have to maintain your spontaneity and the wonderful life and quirks, because everything disappears if you polish too much. If your direction wanders around, your animators wonder what they're supposed to do, the performance gets mushy. It's all about spontaneity!" □

Boris (Jason Alexander) and Natasha (Rene Russo) are about to turn Rocky and Piper Perabo into vegetables in the studios of Fearless Leader's Really Bad TV.





what he is going to do with them, and he just says, 'I'll show you.' The floor opens up, three chairs come up and there are three missing FBI agents who have been transformed into a carrot, a potato and a radish."

With his prosthetic creations waiting in the wings—brightly colored, foam latex grocery attachments atop solemn-looking, dark-suited figures—Nicotero recounted his role in the BULLWINKLE bandwagon. "When we were initially contacted to do this job, we were hired to do another character, which is this mole character, which was another outrageous sight gag where there's a line that they think that there's a mole in the Whitehouse, then they pan to this character which is literally a mole which is running around in the Oval office and nobody else notices. The vegetable people came about as an afterthought because we did a good job on the mole."

Fearless Leader's makeup was designed by De Niro's personal makeup artist, Iona Herman, with Ken Diaz applying a prosthetic nose and ears to compliment the Pottsylvania despot's manic, buzz-cut look. Makeup and hair stylists John Elliott, Kim Santantonio, Shane Pasish and Enzo Angelieri tended to Boris Badenov and Natasha Fatale.

With ILM's David Andrews and visual effects supervisor Roger Guyett watching over proceedings, and Keith Scott supplying Bullwinkle and the Narrator's lines off-camera with Susan McAnuff, the director's wife, acting as temporary voice for Rocket J. Squirrel—standing in on set for the original, veteran voice artist June Foray, who would later be reunited with the squirrel in post-production—the assembled forces began their 70-day shoot, estimating eyelines and performing to thin air, February 16, 1999.

"A lot of film directing is really about story-telling and performance and you collaborate with all kinds of different teams of people," said McAnuff, full of energy in the midst of shooting. "Many of those departments actually parallel the work a director does in the theatre. You're working with costumes, you're working with production designers

## DES MCANUFF, DIRECTOR

**"The challenge is to bring out the best in all of the other artists, particularly the actors, who are the main collaborators on any project—even if they happen to be an animated moose."**



Rene Russo as Natasha Fatale and Jason Alexander as Boris Badenov, Pottsylvania superspies, capturing the J-Rated spirit of the original cartoons.

and so on. In working the visual effects—the CGI shots, the digital animation, all the bluescreen, and even in the cel animation—the parallel for me is that it's like working with a video department on stage, or working with rear projections. There's always some new technology that's coming along. Maybe you're working with robotic lighting instruments and suddenly you have a new department of four people controlling them. All of that I find really exciting. The important thing to remember is that it's actually all part of a storytelling process and you must not allow it to become about what kind of wonderful visual effect can we do here. Everything has to ultimately serve the story, including me. I've never done a bluescreen shot in my life, so initially that was somewhat daunting, but I have had terrific support. I've been in pre-production since June 1998, not including the time before that when Jane Rosenthal, Kenny Lonergan and I and various other people were working on the script. I started working full-time with Industrial Light and Magic the week of July 4, 1998, so I've been really close with Roger, my visual effects supervisor, and

Dave, my animation director. They've been a fabulous team; very forthright with information."

One of the most exciting moments for screenwriter Kenneth Lonergan came when McAnuff and production designer Gavin Bocquet invited him on a tour of the BULLWINKLE soundstages. "It was just really thrilling to see sets based on your ideas, particularly with this movie which was so cartoony and a had lot of fictitious locations—hopefully when you see the movie you'll realize that literally some of the locations are themselves a joke. To see that caught in wood and plaster and paint and lights, made real by someone as imaginative and talented as Gavin was really exciting for me. And Des' ideas for how the film should look seemed always to be right on the money."

**A**s shooting concluded, Lonergan was completing his fourth Tribeca association, the screenplay to Rosenthal's personal favorite of Ward's characters, PEABODY AND SHERMAN, to be a live-action/animatronic boy and his

dog adventure.

Keith Scott wound up his three and a-half month odyssey, voicing Bullwinkle on set, then returned a year later to do post-production voice looping. The gruelling location shoot included six days on farm locations in Sacramento, which doubled for the moose and squirrel's cross-country trek through Illinois, Indiana and Arizona. "A high budget film shoot is a totally different lifestyle to my normal voiceover work, where I make my own hours," said Scott. "When you go out on location, it's like being a gypsy." An \$80-million gypsy caravan, to quote the studio estimate at the time of shooting.

"There's a lot of excitement about this film, not only because of the old show's cult status," said Scott. "When an audience watches the old shows now, they can really see they were 30 years ahead of their time. They were produced at a time when Hannah Barbera was doing series after series about a cat chasing two mice. Rocky and Bullwinkle were talking about Congress, satirizing television and the Cold War. They were really The Simpsons of their day. As a matter of fact, Matt Groening, the creator of The Simpsons, has always said that he has always paid homage to Jay Ward Productions because he knew that they were very smart cartoons. Verbally smart. That's how Bart J. Simpson and Homer J. Simpson got their middle initial 'J'—from Rocket J. Squirrel, Bullwinkle J. Moose and lines like they were 'in dire J. peril'—which came from the writer, Bill J. Scott. The people who got those jokes were the bright kids growing up."

McAnuff used a bright kid of his own—his daughter—to help him make the film's satire accessible to a broad audience. "She's helped me identify what might not be clear to kids, so in a way she's been like a partner for me on this film," said the director. "The challenge is the same as on any film. It really has to do with being an aesthetic general as the director, as a friend of mine describes the job. The challenge is to bring out the best in all of the other artists, particularly the actors, who are the main collaborators on any project—even if they happen to be an animated moose." □



# FOR THE CAUSE

By Dan Persons

The odds were against them. Determined to wrest control from the monolithic powers that had overrun their land, the band of rebels—a poorly equipped gathering of grizzled veterans and determined youths—struck off into hostile territory. There, in a ravaged land made inhospitable by decades of mistreatment, they battled bitter cold, ravaging illness, and paralyzing apathy to attain their goals. The struggle was hard, but the reward was great: liberation, rebirth, a new day for a realm too long stultifying under the rigid confines of its faceless masters. Talk about low-budget filmmaking. Not only is the above a basic outline for FOR THE CAUSE, the new SF action film coming out of a joint partnership between Miramax and Nu Image Films, it's also an accurate description of the production itself, a saga in which two maverick filmmakers bucked the odds and braved countless deprivations in order to make their vision of science fiction cinema a reality.

It started with Tim and Dave Douglas, two brothers from Clovis, CA who spent their youth steeped in the heady influences of anime and science-fiction film. Seeking their fortunes in Hollywood, the two eventually found themselves at Sony Pictures Imageworks, where they worked on such projects as VIRTUOSITY and SPEED. Their reign in effects was short-lived, though: Dave, one of the few digital matte painters working at the time, fell victim to carpal tunnel syndrome and was fired in 1996. Not yet willing to let go of their dreams, the brothers decided to roll the dice on a risky experiment: a short film that would show the establishment what could be done with limited means and endless imagination.

What got the ball rolling was a curious idea formed of equal parts science fiction and fantasy. Said Dave Douglas, "Originally, the idea came about like this: I'm a hard-

## How an ambitious first feature sits on the shelf at Miramax



Breccan Computer Ops prepare for battle (l to r) Leighton (Michelle Krusiac), Able (Jodi Wise) and Chapman (Maria Kancheva), SF action from Nu Image.

line cynic about the idea that our causes and beliefs and technologies are beyond reproach. We always talk to ourselves about how nature is being shaped by man, but of course that isn't true at all. We eke a corner of the ecology and we build this and that and it looks very impressive, but one tidal wave comes along and, boom, the whole thing is pretty much washed away.

"What I wanted to do was create a world where technology was revered like a religion. If a piece of equipment broke down, that was a sign of a lack of your own faith. Well, as time goes by, you can imagine that more and more people are going to be seen as heretics, because more and more of their gear will be breaking down. We got to the short, and we decided that we wanted to do the old bomb-defusing thing, but we wanted to do it a whole different way. Instead of cutting the red wire or cutting the blue wire, we wanted a bomb that was designed not to

be disarmed—it was a vicious, predatory animal, trapped in a corner. And so, instead of going into the computer, because at the time JOHNNY MNEMONIC and a bunch of other films were coming out and we felt that that pretty much covered it, we wanted the system to manifest itself. So these two ideas came together: imagine a technology where when you create an icon or a computer program, it's represented by a 20-foot monster that materializes across the room. You, as the operator, are almost like an angel fighting off a demon. It's very primal."

The final concept was a six minute snippet of action in which a group of rebels, trapped in the compound they were intending to blow up, were forced to do battle with the monsters generated as safeguards by the sentient bomb. At the Douglas brothers' request, sympathetic Imageworks employees left a few studio doors open over the Labor Day weekend. The resulting live-action footage was enough to win the Douglas' semi-official approval

from the Imageworks higher-ups; the completed short, FOR THE CAUSE, was an action-packed, special effects extravaganza that became something of a cult item among Hollywood players. James Cameron received a private screening, *Variety* highlighted the brothers' struggles in its pages, and studios began vying for the Douglas' services, with Miramax eventually getting first dibs.

But the Douglas boys had not reached their happy ending, yet. "It's a touchy subject," said Tim Douglas, noting that whatever difficulties Miramax initially presented, the company did eventually put its support behind FOR THE CAUSE: THE FEATURE. "Essentially, what happened was we were originally going to be doing a film with Miramax called LATENT IMAGE, which was the script that they decided would be the best for our first film. It was sort of a ghost story, not a horror film by





**Future War:** Thomas Ian Griffith as Evans inspects Justin Whalin as Sutherland for a broken arm during infiltration of the Obsidian lines, an ambitious first feature from Dave and Tim Douglas, filmed in Bulgaria.

**“What you got was the look of the future completely run-down to the point where these people are dipping into the last pocket, their children.”**

—Dave Douglas, Co-Director—

any means, more of a suspense, ghost story that we still definitely want to make. But once we signed with Miramax, they decided it really wasn't the right project to begin with, and so we went back and forth on many different projects, trying to figure out what that first one was. We never really could make up our minds, in the sense that David and myself didn't want to do horror movies, and that's sort of what was offered to us. So we had to make a choice as to what we were going to do. In the end, neither our side nor Miramax could agree on anything. After three and a half years of going back and forth and making it into pre-production on several projects—one of them was *ALLIED FORCES*, a great, sci-fi film that we're also still hoping to make—we couldn't come to an agreement, and the other film company, Nu Image Films, partnered up with Miramax to make *FOR THE CAUSE* on a much smaller budget than we had originally planned for the film.”

Although incorporating the original tech-as-sorcery concept advanced in the short film, the story of *FOR THE CAUSE: THE MOVIE* is actually based on one of the darker aspects of World War II. “In the second World War,” said Dave Douglas, “at the very end, in '45, the Germans began not only accepting but also in many cases almost conscripting young children to be part of the final defense of the Reich. This is one of the great crimes of World War II that nobody ever talks about, because in our minds it's always 35-year-old Americans storming the beaches at Normandy. That's of course a very powerful story,

but there's this whole other aspect of [these kids and of] 20 million Russians being killed, and the agonies that they all went through. At the end of the war, very young people on both sides were being trained and sent into battle to fight a war for an ideology that they didn't even understand. I saw this picture of a 15-year-old German soldier just crying as his position had been overrun by the Russians, and became very interested in this and why nobody had ever talked about it.

“We went out to the studios and to everybody and we said, ‘Look, we want to make a story with these themes,’ but no one was interested in the Russians and no one was interested in the Germans. So what we did was we took the short that we had made, and we used that as kind of the basis for a science fiction allegory. So now all of a sudden it was the Breccans versus the Obsidians, and people started to get it.”

Continued Tim Douglas, “It's about a distant world that has been colonized by Earth—this is way in the future, the time is-

Director Dave Douglas, who ended up sharing credit and responsibilities with brother Tim, sets-up a shot on location with DP Adolpho Bartoli (2nd from left).



n't really relevant, just the fact that it's thousands of years in the future. On this planet there are two cities; one in the north and one in the south; one is the city of Brecca and one is the city of Obsidian. These two cities have been at war for a hundred years; it has gotten to the point where they should have given up a long time ago. All their resources are gone; the fighting age of the average soldier is 13, 14, 15—they're very young kids. The war is just continuing, and this general from the city of Brecca, Mirran, decides that this has got to end. The only way to do that is to form a small team of the most experienced soldiers he can find to go to the city of Obsidian and to deliver an EMP [Electro-Magnetic Pulse device] to disable the defenses of the city of Obsidian, so that they can then sue for peace. The film is about the journey from the city of Brecca to the city of Obsidian and what happens along that journey.”

With a budget of \$2.5 million and a cast that included *LOIS AND CLARK*'s Dean Cain as Mirran, and Thomas Ian Griffith (*JOHN CARPENTER'S VAMPIRES*), the brothers Douglas packed their bags and set off for Bulgaria, which Nu Image offered up as the ultimate in low-budget production bases. “A lot of people ask us if there was some kind of amazing technology or if some new sort of program or something like that saved us money,” said Dave Douglas.

“But I swear to you, all we did was spend the money where it needed to be spent, and that was it. There was no secret, there was no magic panacea to it, other than the fact that if we could do it for \$1,500, we did it for \$1,500. Tim and I flew over coach; we flew the Russian planes, which was an incredible experience: a Tupelov 154, which is a plane that I think they stopped making spare parts for about ten years ago. When we got there, we stayed at the company hotel; not a lot of frills—our daily per diem was the equivalent of like five U.S. dollars a day. In Bulgaria, that worked out to be about twenty bucks. Tim and I didn't have a trailer or a green room, we basi-



cally cut corners bare. We also knew exactly what we wanted. If we designed an effect, if we designed a set, we made sure that we had it nailed down, drawn out, rendered, and that our people understood exactly what it was that they were going to build. That's very important in Bulgaria, because science fiction is very new to them, and if you don't have your aesthetic nailed down, you get something that's, to put it mildly, interesting."

While Dave Douglas admitted that basing production in a former Soviet bloc nation had its risks, it also carried its rewards. "If you're going to shoot an allegory for the war on the Eastern front, go to the Eastern front. We got some amazing production value, but you can imagine: I landed in Bulgaria on January 4, [1999,] basically during the worst winter on record in quite some time. We were shooting dialogue scenes outdoors, 20 or 30 below, 40 mile-an-hour winds, really, really cold stuff. But you get a look on your film that makes it all worthwhile, because it looks like a bigger film.

"What I really hate about low-budget science fiction is that it always looks like somebody went out to the Fontana steel mill, set up some smoke pots, dressed up a bunch of guys in throw-away gear from a *ROBOCOP* film and walked them through the rubble. That's the look; you can always tell: that's a Chevy back there with a Hoover vacuum cleaner on the hood, that kind of a thing. We wanted things that had distinctive looks: a certain look for the city to the north, a certain look for the city to the south, a certain look for all the different places that they travel through. So basically what we did was we ran around the countryside for weeks beforehand, just finding these insane locations: monuments that were built during the Krushchev era that were now abandoned; big sections of crumbling buildings that had been built, I guess, right before the fall of Communism and then abandoned. So what you got, instead of the look of a run-down present-day, was a look of the future completely run-down to the point where these people are dipping into the last pocket, which is their own children."

The ravages didn't all wind up on screen, though. Dave Douglas, for one, had his own private battle, specifically with a decidedly tenacious flu. "I was never out," he said, "but I was definitely down at certain points. I had probably 16 days of hun-



Late night filming in the Programmers Hallway, actually the Bulgarian Palace of Justice, achieving lavish production value on a budget of just \$2.5 million.

dred-plus temperatures, and six of those were spent at 103 or 104. I never missed a day. Tim got sick; ultimately everybody got sick. That's another thing about the Bulgarians: they were very warm to us, but the problem was that the people who prepared your food were also the people who came over and gave you a hug. You could never tell who had what or when or anything. The actors weathered it fairly well, but we all definitely got the Bulgarian crud at one point or another."

As a counterbalance, Dave Douglas discovered that, over the 36-day shoot, sibling loyalty went a long way towards shouldering the burden. Originally, *FOR THE CAUSE* was planned as a solo directing project for the elder Douglas. Once on-location, though, the two brothers realized there were many reasons why Tim should assume an equal share of the helm. Said Dave Douglas, "It was one of those deals: 'There's no possible way with our budget and our time that we can capture this, this, and this. But, wait a minute, if Tim goes out to the middle of the frozen tundra a hundred miles from here and shoots this scene, we can dah-tadah-tadah...' Slowly but surely the duties got divided up, and by the time we were in

post-production working on visual effects...let me put it this way: I'd love to take the credit, but reality sort of presented itself. By the end of the film, we were both making the decisions, and so this is what, in my mind, he deserved. It was something we had both worked equally on, so it just seemed logical."

"There was a lot of overlap," said Tim Douglas, "which is why we decided to just share the directing credit. Initially, David worked more with the principal actors, that's definitely where his strength was. I started picking up the slack near the end of production, as we had some more overlap on that side as well. One of the things I definitely handled that David wasn't doing was the visual effects supervision, because that's been my specialty for the last ten years. I would do the day-to-day of working with the visual effects team over at Blur Studio, and then David would come in pretty much once a day and he'd look at what we'd done the previous day and then we'd sort of decide where to go from there. The one thing that I stayed on top of was the technical side of the visual effects."

*FOR THE CAUSE* wrapped its Bulgaria shoot on March 30, 1999. Effects were done at Blur Studios, a company formed

from the former pre-visualization group of Sony Pictures Imageworks. Using mostly off-the-shelf equipment and software with some customized renderers, the shop set forth to generate the CG effects that would complete the Douglas' far-future world. As they had on the live-action shoot, both Dave and Tim became directly involved in the process, Tim generating several effects shots himself ("Eye-candy stuff, lots of high-tech displays..."), while Dave picked up the electronic stylus once more to create several set-extension matte paintings that carried forward concepts created in Craig Mullens' main paintings.

About effectively deploying *CAUSE*'s \$430,000 effects budget, Tim Douglas said, "The key with us was that we really went in with a plan and we stuck with it. What really allowed us to do about 83 visual effects shots for the film was that David and I both understand visual effects, because that's our background. When we worked with the team over at Blur, we didn't just come to them and say, 'Well, here's a rough idea. Start here and we'll see what you guys do, and in a couple of weeks we'll give you feedback and you can do it again'—that's how most



**“I wanted to create a world where technology was revered like a religion. If a piece of equipment broke it was a sign of a lack of your faith.”**

**—Dave Douglas, Co-Director—**

companies work; you don't have the hands-on for the director and the visual effects supervisor. What we did on this one was we gave them a very detailed plan of what we needed for every shot, and then I basically moved all of my computer gear into their facility, so that I would be on-call all day long. That way, instead of having a one-day cycle where the animator would work all day and then the next day I'd come in and look at it and change everything, I would be there every five minutes, whenever he wanted to talk to me. That way, we never really went down any paths to waste time. A lot of people ask us, 'What is the key to doing visual effects so inexpensively?' You cut out that delayed feedback and instead of seeing 20 percent of the work you do on the screen, you're seeing pretty much 90 to 100 percent."

Both brothers agree that 90 to 100 percent was also an accurate representation of what actually made it to the final cut of *FOR THE CAUSE*. "Both David and I are completely happy and satisfied," said Tim about the version that emerged from post-production at the beginning of January, 2000. "We feel that although we were very much challenged on the budget—and that's an understatement—we pulled it off. Nu Image Films, who are the main producers of the film, really let us make the film the way we wanted to. That is an incredibly rare situation for first-time filmmakers. I think that they really took a chance on us, because normally they insist on clearing the script



Effects expert Tim Douglas supervised the post-production at their own in-house facility, Blur Effects. Able (Jodi Wise) takes out an enemy Obsidian soldier (above) and stands against Warhammer's attack (below).

and producing on a day-to-day basis. But with us, I think they realized that we had a very specific vision for what we wanted, and they actually allowed us to do that. This film, with the exception of one small scene that we had to omit, is pretty much the director's cut."

"You know what's interesting?" Dave Douglas concluded. "I intended a much grittier, harsher film. But I wrote this four years ago, and the political landscape was very different then. The funny thing is we were writing a very anti-war film, a comment on the madness of children facing each other in combat. But because of what happened in Littleton, because of what happened in Paducah, because of all these shootings, we really toned down the violence. The violence in itself is not graphic, it's very suggestive—we are handling what I think is an extraordinarily delicate subject. We want people to understand it and get the story, but we don't want to turn them off by what they'd consider to be gratuitous violence. You walk a very thin line, I wanted it to be harder, but what I got instead is a much more visually striking look



than we would have had otherwise. In many ways, especially as [the soldiers] get south towards the other city, it takes on an extraordinarily surreal look. What we wound up with was a great contrast between this bitterly cold, hard, rugged landscape, and these almost magical city interiors.

"The essence of what we did is still there, but like every low-budget filmmaker, I would have liked to blow up twice as many buildings." □

Able conjures wings of energy and light, technology so advanced it looks like magic. Below: Obsidian, the enemy city, a world thousands of years in the future.





# DRAGONHEART

## A NEW BEGINNING

**Raffaella De Laurentiis produces a lavish fantasy sequel for direct-to-video release.**

*By Dan Scapperotti*

"Long ago, when man was young and the dragon already old, the wisest of our race took pity on man, so he gathered together all the dragons, making them vow to watch over man always."

So spoke Draco, the dragon in DRAGONHEART. The noble Draco, who breathed his last 20 years ago, was believed to be the last of the dragons. But there was another. DRAGONHEART: A NEW BEGINNING hits video shelves July 25 from Universal.

Producer Raffaella De Laurentiis, daughter of filmmaker Dino De Laurentiis and Italian actress Silvana Mangano, had waited four years for the right script to film the sequel to the 1996 feature. In the meantime she stockpiled all the costumes, swords and props from DRAGONHEART in Slovakia and returned there to produce KULL, THE CONQUEROR, the fantasy epic with Kevin Sorbo.

In the new film, a dragon's egg has been discovered by Friar Peter. To protect it and mankind, the priest has hidden Drake, the hatchling, away beneath a monastery for 20 years. Drake is Draco's son! "He looks like a teenage version of Draco," said De Laurentiis. "He looks like he is in the same family but a lot younger and smaller. I learned a lot from the first movie. We had problems with the size and [scope]. One of the things I wanted to do was make the dragon smaller so we could



Chris Masterson as Geoff and Drake, son of Sean Connery's Draco in the original DRAGONHEART, going off to battle in Universal's direct-to-video sequel.

keep him and the kid in the same shot and have more fun. If the dragon is too big then you lose the perspective between the human and the dragon. When we finished the first movie we had a deal with Mattel toys. They said, 'It's too bad that this movie didn't have an evil dragon for the good dragon to fight.' So I said, 'We'll put it in the next one.' The things that I learned from the first picture I stuck in the second one. There are two dragons. They will be fighting."

The theme of East-Meets-West is prominent in the film. Two emissaries from China arrive searching for a dragon foretold by a prophecy. Eastern martial arts clash with European knights in the action scenes. De Laurentiis searched for a director who combined a skill for martial arts action sequences

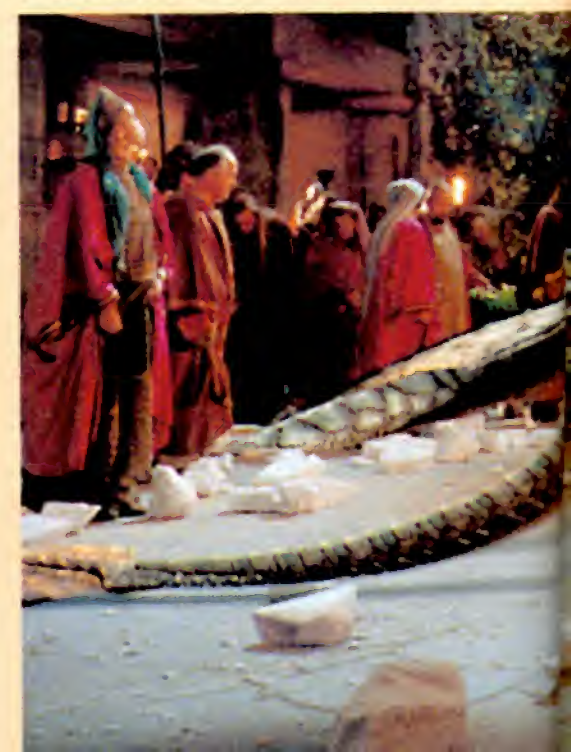
and an imagination. She found what she needed in Doug Lefler an ex-Disney artist who had worked on THE FOX AND THE HOUND and THE BLACK CAULDRON before moving into directing episodes of XENA and HERCULES.

"One of the reasons they gave me this job was because they thought I could do that kind of stuff fast because I was used to doing it on a TV schedule," said Lefler. "I actually studied martial arts for many years. I've always enjoyed elaborating on it. Professionally, I love to direct. Personally, if I had nothing else going on I would sit and draw all day long. I worked on THE BLACK CAULDRON storyboards for two years. When Raffaella first gave me the script to DRAGONHEART II, I [saw it as] an opportunity to put in some of

the elements that didn't go into THE BLACK CAULDRON."

This is De Laurentiis' third venture in the small Eastern European country. Slovakia's capital, Bratislava is home to the Koliba Film Studio where the production set up headquarters and used the facilities for many of the interior scenes. Ancient castles dot the landscape which includes rugged mountains and lush forests. "Slovakia is where I filmed the first one," said the producer. "I kept everything so I have a good little operation there. All I had to do was turn the key into my workshops and storage and I had a lot of stuff already there. It's a very small but extremely beautiful country so you can get everything from snow peaks to lakes. Everything is no more than six hours away. There's a great film studio and the crews have gotten better and better. It's a great looking place with a great facility and really

Drake readies for the climactic battle.







Drake, CGI effects by California-based Metrolite. The ambitious sequel features 151 effects shots, just 30 short of the original, and took a year to produce.

**DOUG LEFLER, DIRECTOR**

**“There were times when I’d want something and ask my English first AD, who’d ask his Irish 2nd, who’d give it to the French 3rd, who would tell the Italian production designer.”**

good crews. What else could you ask for?”

For De Laurentiis, returning to Slovakia was like a homecoming, for the American Lefler it was, well...interesting. “It was the first time I had worked in a country where English wasn’t the first language,” he said. “It went remarkably well, all things considered. When you’re working in a country like that with a multinational crew like we had it’s a little bit like playing the game of telephone where you sit around in a group and one person whispers something to the person next to them and it would go around the circle. By the time it came back to you what you had said initially was nothing like

what you hear at the end. There were times when I would want something and I would ask my English first AD, who would turn around and ask his Irish 2nd, who would give it to the French 3rd, who would tell the Italian production designer, who would turn it over to the Slovak art director. What I got was usually not what I had in mind. With all that, we were able to work remarkably fast with very few headaches. Everybody was very eager and it’s surprising how the language barrier doesn’t matter that much. You find that you can understand people even when they’re not speaking your language.”

The film’s Medieval setting

calls for castles and, although the King’s castle is a model, all the other structures are real. One in particular was a revelation to Lefler. “The castle that we used for the monastery strangely enough was used in the 1922 classic German film *NOSFERATU*. It hasn’t changed that much in 76 years. They used a lot of the same locations within the castle that we did.”

Eschewing the \$50 million budget afforded the original film, De Laurentiis planned a direct-to-video release of her new feature. She also decided on a family-oriented production. While thrills and adventures would abound, the action sequences would avoid spurting blood and severed heads. “We wanted to skew the picture younger and go for families,” she explained. “It came out so good that people started talking about it for theatrical.”

Early in pre-production the producer decided to avoid budget-busting star names for her cast and make Drake, the Dragon the star of the film. This, of course, meant the effects work had to be top-notch with a convincing talking dragon. She contacted Metrolight, a California-based effects house that had worked on *KULL* (see sidebar, page 57). The effects work took

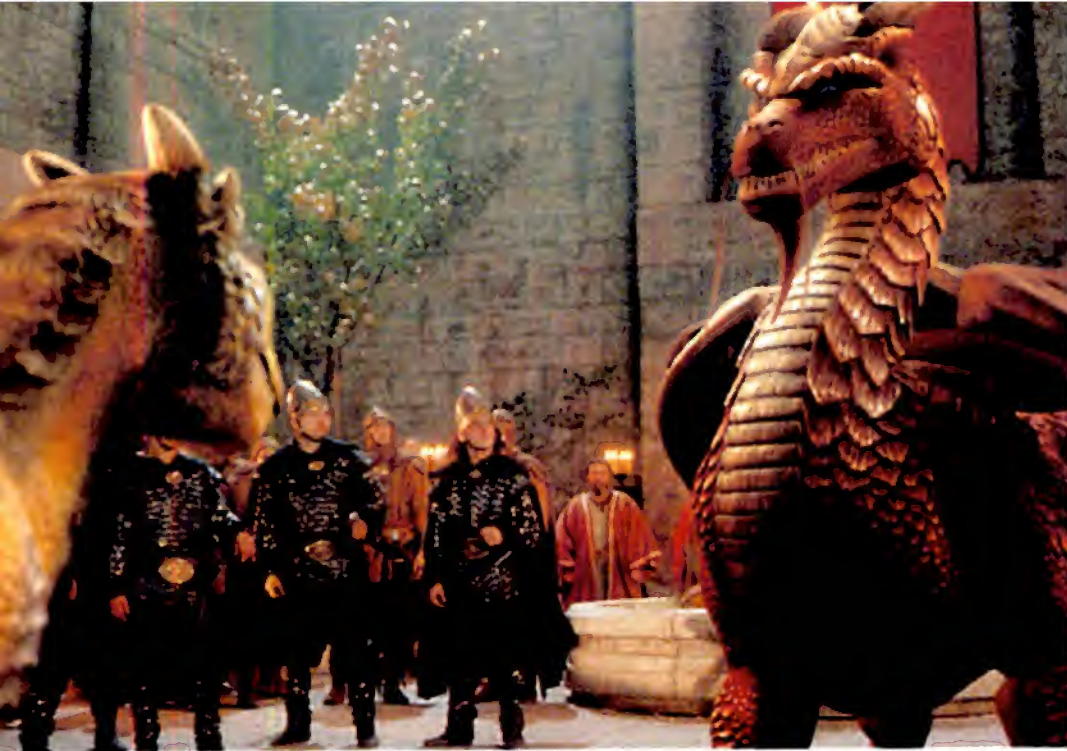
over a year to deliver. Although there are some matte paintings, star fields and models, the main effects work involved with the dragons. “I was trying to do this for a price,” said DeLaurentiis. “We made this for \$7 million, so I had to take a completely different approach, which made it really fun. It showed how much you can do if you know how to spend your money.”

The original film boasts 181 effects shots while *DRAGONHEART II* has 151 shots. Lefler’s challenge was to incorporate them in a hurried production schedule. One day the shooting was going particularly well. The director paused to determine what made this day different from all the others. “I realized it was the first day I had that all I had to do was direct dialogue and actors,” Lefler said. “There were no stunts. There were no visual effects plates to be shot and there were no gags. *DRAGONHEART II* was really a very complex film because of all the elements that had to be worked out and all the visual gags that we were doing in almost every scene. That day turned out to be the only day where I had only actors to direct, every other day we were involved with some other silliness. We had to work really

Drake breathes fire as he faces-down Griffin, an evil dragon, at the film’s climax. De Laurentiis added scenes of monsters fighting at the request of toy licensees.







Drake and Griffin come face to face. De Laurentiis insisted on making the sequel's dragons smaller to make them more compatible for human interaction.

fast. We had to plan it really fast. I insisted on drawing my own storyboards because I had always done that. I had to spend most of my time when I was storyboarding just reworking the special effects sequences because we were trying to do something that was very ambitious, but we didn't have the money to be terribly ambitious. We had to keep reworking those sequences to cut down the visual effects and still keep the dragon as the main character in the story. We didn't have a lot of time in pre-production so an awful lot of it was made up as we went along."

Like many directors who work with effects, Lefler was brought up on Ray Harryhausen. As a teenager the director hoped to make a career in stop-motion animation. "I started out wanting to be Ray Harryhausen," he said, "but I got more into the planning stages of filmmaking. But I carry that love of creating films like that with me."

When DRAGONHEART II came along, Lefler felt here was a dream come true. A chance for him to return to his roots. Here was a chance to put some of the Harryhausen lore to work. "It was a lot of fun getting back and working with animators," said Lefler, "and combining both my knowledge of stop-motion animation and traditional character animation and the field of CGI animation. All the people we worked with over at Metrolight were very enthusiastic. We'd have discussions about the different scenes. I'd say, 'Now this is the Ray Harry-

hausen scene where the two monsters fight each other. In this scene I want you to think of Bill Tytla and how he would have animated it.' They would ask me, 'Who's Bill Tytla?' I told them, 'When you get home you have to watch a "A Night On Bald Mountain" in FANTASIA.'"

During the editing process, before creation of the visual effects, Lefler put his drawing talents to work and created some renderings of the dragon to better visualize the scene. "When we were cutting the film together I did drawings of the dragon in various poses," he explained. "We scanned them into the computer and cut them into the shot. We put a paper dragon into the frame wherever he was going to be and we zoomed in and out to create the sense of movement. In some cases I animated poses so we could get a sense of cutting into the action. It really helped us to piece it together quickly. It also helped a lot when we went to animation because it eliminated several steps in the process. Normally you give the empty frame to the animation company and they come back with a pose test to see if the dragon is in the right position, the right attitude? We were able to skip over all that by doing this.

"It's amazing that Raffaella and I have gotten along so well," said Lefler, "because she is basically a cat person and I'm a dog person. There was one point where I went back to New Zealand to direct another episode of XENA. I was gone for three weeks and when I got

## RAFFAELLA DE LAURENTIIS

**"I kept everything [in Slovakia] so I have a good little operation. All I had to do was turn the key into my workshops and storage and I had a lot of stuff already there."**

back I noticed that the dragon had all these catlike mannerisms so I had to go back and kind of change it to dog-like mannerisms. We worked really closely. One of the challenging aspects of working on a film like this, where you have a CGI character as a lead, is that the actors have to basically act to an empty frame. We would put up monster sticks, big poles the height of where the head of the dragon would be with circles for eyes, so our actors would have something to look at and have eye contact with. We were lucky in having a largely young cast. They were able to visualize it with their imaginations."

The story is a coming of age tale about a young stable boy and his own quest for knighthood against a background of tyranny and superstition. Geoff, the stable boy, discovers the existence of the dragon. When Friar Peter dies suddenly, Drake decides he wants to leave the confines of his underground home. Learning of the existence of the dragon, the tyrannical Lord Osric, who wants to use the dragon's heart to solidify his power, befriends Drake and his friend, Geoff. Blinded by his desire for knighthood, Geoff falls under Osric's spell until

Kwan and his ward, Lian bring their martial arts skills into play and the prophecy takes a frightening twist.

"Doug Lefler is heavily into martial arts," said the producer. "He wanted a certain kind of fighting style. The one thing I really enjoyed about this movie is that I took stuff from the two favorite movies I ever made, DRAGONHEART, and DRAGON: THE BRUCE LEE STORY and kind of put them together. We have dragons and dungeons, sword fights and a lot of martial arts in this picture. There is a lot of action, but you really care about the characters too. I'm very pleased with the way it turned out. I went in more to prove that it could be done because nobody believed that you could do a direct-to-video sequel to DRAGONHEART for the money. Not only did I do it for the money, but it is also a picture I'm very proud of."

"We have a lot of action," echoed Lefler. "There is a lot more than originally planned. One of the things that was fun about making this film was that Shari Goodhart had introduced these two Chinese characters in her screenplay. We had a young Chinese girl, Lian, who was

The film's dragon effects were combined with location photography filmed in Bratislava, Slovakia, where De Laurentiis made the original film in 1996.





# CONJURING CGI DRAGONS

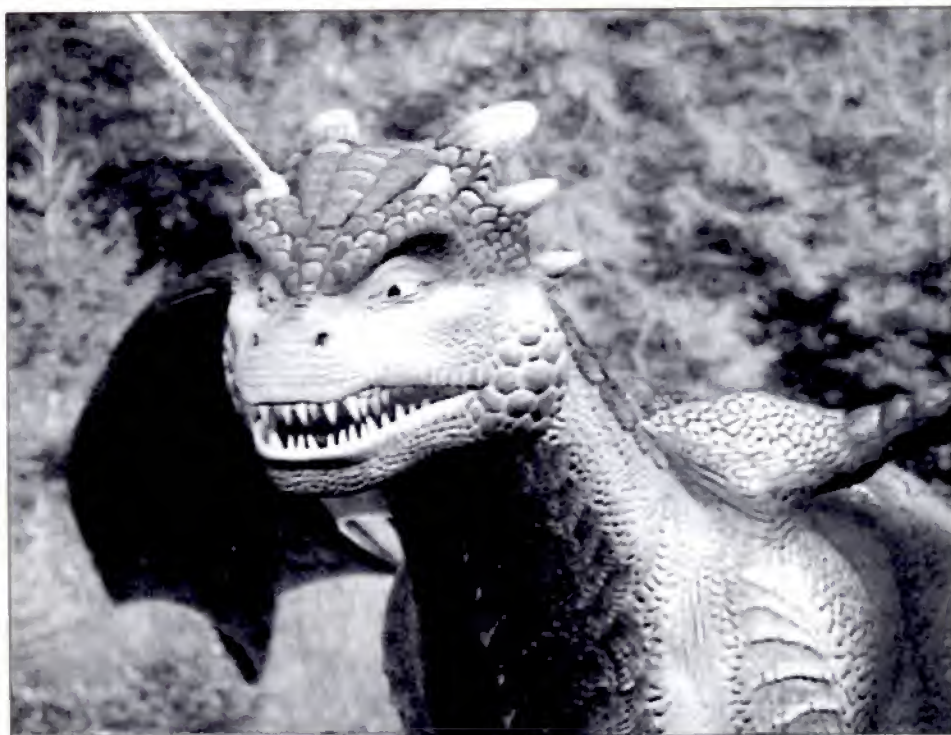
By Dan Scapperotti

Just getting started in the business and Drake is the star of his first movie. He was cast as the son of Draco, the dragon who starred in DRAGONHEART. Pretty impressive. Of course he does thank all the little people who helped him claw his way to the top. Among them is Melissa Taylor, the special effects producer of DRAGONHEART: A NEW BEGINNING, who helped to guide him through the pitfalls of filmmaking. For 14 years Taylor has labored in the fields of special effects contributing to such films as INDIANA JONES AND THE LAST CRUSADE, BACK TO THE FUTURE II, THE THREE MUSKETEERS and DICK TRACY. After working at ILM, Disney and Dream Quest, Taylor came to the 12 year-old Metrolight Studios which won an Oscar for its work on TOTAL RECALL. Producer Raffaella De Laurentiis had used Metrolight for the effects work on KULL and approached president Jim Kristoff to handle the creation of Drake, the young dragon in the DRAGONHEART sequel.

"This film was one of the most fun projects I've ever worked on," said Taylor. "The crew was wonderful; Raffaella was wonderful to work with and the director, Doug Lefler, was a joy. Creating the dragon was incredibly fun. For us it was like raising children. We built the models and put the layers of skin on top and added the color and texture and at a certain point his personality started to come out."

The design of Drake, the dragon, actually had its genesis in a toy. The line of toys generated by DRAGONHEART included a two-headed dragon with Chinese characteristics. The producers brought the toy dragon to Metrolight. "We had a chance to see the toys," said Taylor. "From that toy we made a dragon that was similar, but not two headed and it doesn't come off the way the toy does."

## Metrolite on animating CGI monsters for a price.



Drake, design by Metrolite, inspired by the original film's toy line. Below: VFX producer Melissa C. Taylor, VFX supervising producer John Follmer, animation art director Bruno Vilela and VFX executive producer Dobbie Schiff.



A dragon egg, literally, was all the animators had as a starting point since Drake is hatched at the film's beginning. "We had to come up with ideas as to what he looked like so we hired an illustrator," said Taylor. "We worked together to determine if it was going to be fantasy-based or more photo realistic. What characteristics would he have? How old would he be? What

would his personality be like? Those details kind of helped the story to evolve. Once we came up with the look of the dragon that helped us with what his personality would be like and how he would interact with the other characters. It sort of drove the story from there. He became a teenage Draco."

The company assembled a team of 12 animators working

on SGI platforms and using Alias Wave Front Maya software for the animation. "These models were incredibly complex and we needed a lot of processor in order to render the characters because they're multi-layered," said Taylor.

After breaking down the script into the various positions the dragon would take in the film, the first step in Drake's CG birth was building the model in the computer. CG supervisor Jason Armstrong actually built the model for Drake himself and then supervised the rest of the process, shepherding the project through the facility. The animators would test the model in various poses, sitting, standing, walking. One animation team put the model through little animation exercises to see if he could sit with his arms folded in front of him or sit back on his haunches which was required by the script. He has wings. How far do they spread and is his structure anatomically correct in terms of being able to fly?

Taylor and the animators were particularly concerned with the wings. "We wanted to make sure that these wings were actually able to carry his body," said Taylor. "When he does fly what happens to his wings? Do they hit people? Is there an elegant way for his wings to expand? So we went through all that testing."

While the testing continued another group of artists were working on his textures and color. Using a computer-based palette, various colors were applied to the Drake model. "At the same time they were doing colors, the other artists were doing textures," said Taylor. "They were creating bump maps of different textures that would be applied to the dragon's skin. The bump maps would be applied to the painted layers and then all that would be applied to the model. It was actually like creating the skeleton and then creating the muscles and then adding the flesh on top. As all this was happening,



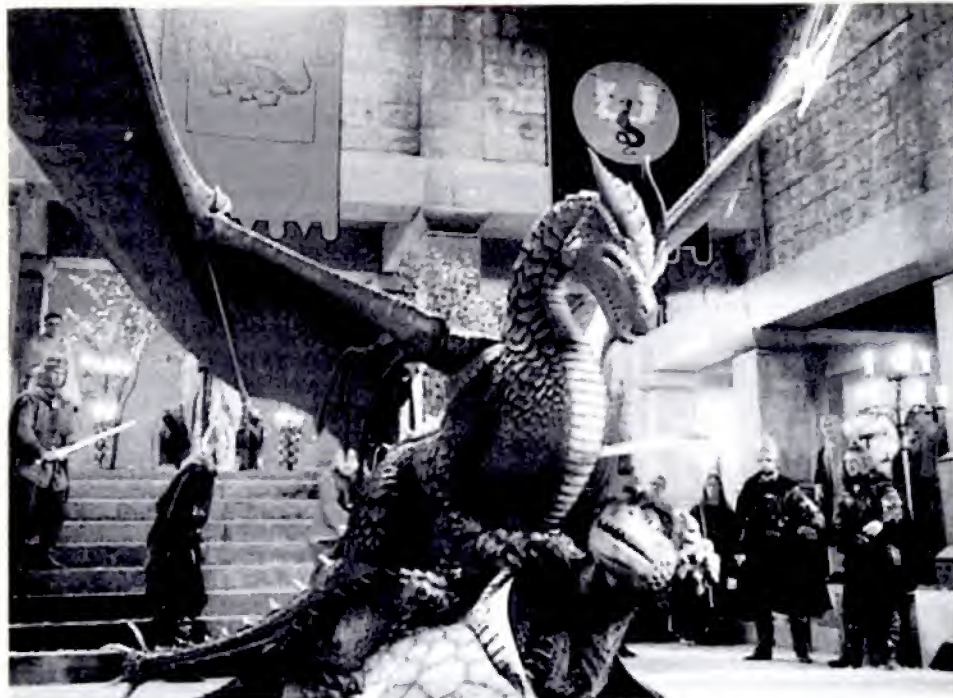
animators were continuing to do tests and working out Drake's facial expressions and creating an automated system for doing facial animation. They made an alphabet of facial expressions that he would do while he was acting in the film."

Another person who gave the fledgling actor a hand was Robby Benson who lent Drake his vocal talents for the film. To assist the animators, the producers provided video footage of Benson reciting Drake's lines. "Before we had his voice, the animators would sit in front of mirrors and watch themselves do the expressions," said Taylor. "Once we had the video tapes available to us we could actually get his expressions, his eyebrows rising and his sneer and his laugh, all the little characteristics that add personality to the character. It's very much like an animated cartoon except we had the added challenges of making these dragons look photo-realistic so they would match to the live-action footage. The character had to fit in. He couldn't look like an animated character walking across the grass. It had to look like a real being walking, making footprints in the grass and shadows on the grass and blowing dust when Drake lands in a dusty field. The dust had to rise up around his body and then settle back down. The trees had to shake as his wings brushed against them. That was an extra challenge that was really exciting for us."

Metrolight went so far as to set up acting classes for its animators and created a room of mirrors for them to practice in. "Once a week for a couple of hours at night they would learn how to express themselves physically in different situations," Taylor explained. "They watched themselves and each other and learned how to appraise themselves acting. They determined such things as what muscles go into different gestures. The animators would go into this room of mirrors, lock the door and work out scenes together or alone. They would get on their hands and knees and walk around, roll and jump to see how their muscles moved and get ideas how the dragons would fight. They also watched

## MELISSA TAYLOR, F/X PRODUCER

**"This was one of the most fun projects I've ever worked on. The crew was wonderful. Raffaella was wonderful to work with, and the director, Doug Lefler, was a joy."**



The evil Griffin overpowers Drake, who is voiced by Robby Benson. Twelve animators used SGI platforms and Alias Wave Front Maya software to move the complex, highly detailed models. Below: The Griffin lands to battle Drake.



videotapes of vultures and eagles fighting."

Initially, Taylor and visual effects supervisor Ron Simonson took a field trip to Slovakia to scout the locations and take photographs of all the backgrounds. Simonson managed all the location plate photography. Returning to Los Angeles, he ensured that the color correction was accurate and the plates would match the images generated by the computer and that the dragons would blend seamlessly with the background in

terms of color and texture and lighting. The materials gathered on these pre-production trips gave the animators an idea as to where the dragon would be acting and the color schemes of the locales.

"It allowed them to use the palette of colors that we got from that location scout to start to develop the color scheme for the dragons," Taylor explained. "Ron was there for the whole location photography period with a little crew and he supervised all the plate photography.

He was on hand with a large cardboard model that he would put in place when the dragon was supposed to be standing in the scene. They would have a bar with eyes on it to show where the dragon's eyes would be so the actors would know where to look. They called that a 'dragon stick.' Someone, the script supervisor or the director, would read the dragon's lines and the actors would act off of that."

Bruno Vilela, another of Drake's buddies, wore two hats on the project. He was the animation supervisor, as well as the in house art director who honchoed all the animation. Raffaella De Laurentiis and Doug Lefler were involved with the process of Drake's creation every step of the way. "We had a meeting every morning with Raffaella and Doug at 8:30 for months and months and months," said Taylor. "They looked at the animation and they'd give us their feedback on the dailies. Then we would sit down with the animators and go over it all again and give them the feedback and then try to hit the ground running by getting everybody going early each day trying to get as much done in a day as possible. There was a lot of work. We have 151 shots in the film averaging five seconds each."

Since the project was always planned as a direct-to-video release by Universal Home Video, the effects team could cut some corners, but not many. The complex visual effects took a year to render. Although the animation took the same amount of time to create, time could be shaved for the film resolution. "The resolution was not as intense," said Taylor. "It was video resolution as opposed to film resolution and that takes a lot less time to render. If we were going to film we would probably have many more months to do the rendering. That way we were able to do it a lot faster."

Still, DRAGONHEART II spent six months in research and development and building the models and then an additional six months for the animation. Of late, Drake has been nudging the Metrolight executive to start that Oscar campaign early. Hey, he's a star! □





On location at the Koliba Film Studios in Bratislava, producer Raffaella De Laurentiis and director Doug Lefler, a Ray Harryhausen stop-motion fan.

supposed to do martial arts. I was very intrigued by the East-meets-West action. We had a team of Slovakian stunt players who performed all the sword fights and European battle stuff. Then we brought in a fellow named Tony Young and he created all of the Kung-Fu. We were really specific that we wanted Chinese Kung-Fu as opposed to any other kind of martial arts because I thought it would be such a striking contrast to the guys in armor. We have a sequence between Lian and all these guards where she mops the floor with them. Raffaella really likes that kind of stuff so we took those action scenes and elaborated on them. Some of the people we were making the movie for were getting nervous that we were going to make this into a Kung-Fu film. We stopped short of that."

Rona Figueroa appears as the quiet Lian, whose outer demeanor shields a little whirlwind of action when events call

for it. Figueroa makes her screen debut in the film but has been busy in New York theater including a role as Kim in the long-running *MISS SAIGON*. Her singing talents are on display over the film's end credits in a beautiful song, "My Heart Goes With You," written by screenwriter Shari Goodhartz. The soundtrack will be released by Varese Sarabande Records.

Lian (Rona Figueroa) and Kwan (Henry O), two emissaries from China searching for a dragon foretold in prophecy, adding a sprinkling of martial arts action.



"Interestingly, we had a lot of people who were good candidates for the part of Lian," said Lefler. "We had an embarrassment of riches and it was a tough choice. She was the best of a very good group of people. We flew Rona out of New York and she did a very good job. She had actually never done any martial arts before this film and she poured herself into it with such enthusiasm that she ended up doing a lot of the stunt work herself."

Tony Young brought in Melissa Siew as Figueroa's stunt double. Together they worked out all of the Kung-Fu sequences, working in concert with the Slovakian stunt men who were doing the European side of the fights. "I drew the storyboards for the main action scenes," said Lefler, "and then Young, the stunt coordinator, took and made them better than what I had drawn."

The traitorous Osric is played by British actor Harry Van Gorkum who has appeared in *BATMAN AND ROBIN* and is currently working on *DEEP-CORE 2000*. Chris Masterson who recently landed a recurring role in the hit series *MALCOLM IN THE MIDDLE* was cast as Geoff, the high-spirited stable boy who befriends the dragon. The original script had a younger Geoff, but Lefler added a few years making him a teenager who could handle a sword.

"My philosophy is if you're making something like this to appeal to a wide audience you don't talk down to young people, especially children," Lefler said. "My feeling is you make the story work on a visual level



Chris Masterson of TV's *MALCOLM IN THE MIDDLE* as Geoff, a young stable boy who befriends the dragon.

and keep it as intelligent as possible, then you'll have something that everybody can enjoy. I always try to make films that you can turn the sound off and watch and still follow what's going on with enough things that are visually interesting to keep it alive."

The original film's director, Rob Cohen, had read the off-screen dialogue to his actors and De Laurentiis had wanted to repeat the process with the sequel. But that's not the way it worked out. "I told her that wasn't going to work out, owing to the fact that I'm the world's worst actor. Anybody who knows Raffaella knows that she is nothing if not persistent. She kept hounding me about it and then at one point I actually did act one of the parts. She came up to me and said 'You're right. You are the world's worst actor. We'll get somebody else to read the off-camera lines.'"

High on the film, De Laurentiis feels the DTV release doesn't mean a lesser film. "I believe that a movie should stand on its own because when people are going to watch it they are either going to like it or not like it," she said. "They're not going to say, 'Oh it costs so little.' As a producer I take great pride in the work because it looks great and was done for a fifth of the original budget and it has a lot of great stuff in it." □



# THE PRIMEVALS

## The work continues after the death of auteur

By Ross Plesset

THE PRIMEVALS is arguably the most resilient project in movie history, having begun pre-production in 1978 (it was actually in embryonic form as early as 1967), the movie has overcome virtually every imaginable obstacle and now it must deal with the passing of its creator David Allen (who passed away on August 16, 1999).

Allen's demise from cancer at the age of 54 was a tragic loss for the effects community and the countless people whose careers he helped, nevertheless, his close associates have resumed post-production on THE PRIMEVALS. "David left very clear instructions as to how the film was to progress," explained Chris Endicott, who is overseeing the film. "Due to the close nature of my working relationship with David over the years I have a very clear idea of how he intended the film to progress. This picture meant a lot to David. Up until a week before he passed away we were still discussing shots. It was on his mind constantly."

Written by David Allen and Randy Cook, THE PRIMEVALS concerns a scientific expedition to the Himalayas to unravel the mystery of a recently captured Yeti. The team discovers far more than they bargained for, proto-humans, unclassified animals and extraterrestrials. The script presents these extraordinary characters in an intelligent and believable context.

This movie is a major undertaking for financier Charles Band, who is best known for smaller pictures such as PUPPETMASTER and RE-ANIMATOR; nevertheless, he remains committed to finishing it.



Allen, who died of cancer last August, directs Richard Joseph Paul as a disaffected anthropologist and Vietnamese Tai Thin as the Sherpa guide who leads him to the Yeti.

"Charlie recently screened this picture," continued Endicott, "which now has over a hundred effects shots cut in and where there are no effects we filmed storyboards. Charlie was very excited and seems committed to doing this picture as David wanted it. It's only a matter of finances, which he says is forthcoming. He has no intention of cutting back on the picture at this point, which is good...But until the money comes along, we're having to continue plugging away at the slow pace we've been going at." Band plans a direct-to-video release on his Full Moon label.

For Endicott, a life-long stop motion aficionado working on THE PRIMEVALS is a dream come true. "I read about this movie as a kid in *Cinefantastique*. I was desperate to see this film. It was clearly going to be the best stop-motion picture ever made. It had intelligence, speculative ideas and a wonderful design sensibility. I managed to knock on David's door at the beginning of the '90s and got to work on CRASH AND BURN. A lot of people came

and went at David's studio over the years but I just knew that there was no other place I would rather work. He was a great teacher and a lot of fun to work for." Although Endicott's work on THE PRIMEVALS has mostly been in the photographic end, he has animated a dozen shots, which demonstrate a knack for characterization.

At this point, most of the animation is being carried out by Kent Burton (JAMES AND THE GIANT PEACH), who Allen hired long before his passing.

"It was always David's intention to gear up this production so we would have a small army of people working on different shots at the same time, which never quite worked out," explained Endicott. "Kent was brought on to increase the output and soon after David learned that he had cancer. Since David's passing, Kent has been able to take on the majority of the animation."

Added Burton, "I've been adapting to Dave's style of moving things a little bit slower—mainly with the Yeti because of its size. Dave's shots

came out really smooth and of course we have to compete with computers now. Believe it or not, animating something slow is really hard to do because the movements are smaller. [Dave] was such an exacting person. He had such an eye for small details.

"...The animation in THE PRIMEVALS is kind of in between stop-motion and CGI because of the blur technique that we're using. We triple expose parts of the puppets in different positions during fast reactions. This has been done before but we're doing it in almost every shot. It's puppet animation but there's a little bit more to it.

"Basically now THE PRIMEVALS is just me and Chris. It's kind of cool because that's the way it was done in the old days where a few artists poured their hearts into the whole big production. That's unheard of these days."

Although the movie currently has a skeleton crew, many of Allen's former colleagues are contributing to it, including pyrotechnician Joe Viskocil (INDEPENDENCE DAY), matte artist Robert Stromberg (STAR TREK), effects specialist Joe Grossberg (MAGNOLIA), and composer John Morgan (THE MAGIC TREASURE). "A lot of the people who have been and will be working with us are doing so because of their affection for David and the project," said Endicott. "This gives THE PRIMEVALS access to talent that a film of this budget wouldn't usually have."

Producing a Ray Harryhausen-esque epic in today's CGI world has been problematic. A major challenge that Endicott inherited from Allen is achieving Dynamation-type



# LS

## David Allen.

process shots. "This technique is not used very much anymore," he noted, "and Kodak recently decided to introduce new print stock. This new stock is much more contrasty than it was before. That really plays havoc with process photography. We've done a lot of testing to recreate the look of what we were getting before. We're pretty comfortable with it now, so we should be able to proceed with this new stock in conjunction with the contrast masking technique developed by Jim Danforth in the early '80s."

Although Endicott wishes that post-production could proceed faster, "the results are still really worthwhile and exciting."

Indeed, the rough cut for **THE PRIMEVALS** is very promising. The story is compelling, the production values are solid and most audiences—be they special effects aficionados or uninitiated channel surfers—should be impressed by the animation. It has the smoothness and clarity of CGI married to the surreal and magical qualities of stop-motion. David Allen himself said in 1997: "I'm sure I'm doing the best work of my life on this film."

Let us hope that **THE PRIMEVALS** will be finished as David Allen envisioned it. □



The Lizard Men, conducting animal experiments on Earth before the evolution of man. Below: The Lizard Men attempt to control a rampaging Yeti. Inset: Allen animating. Charles Band's Full Moon plans a video release for the project in 2001.





# TITAN A.E.

## Don Bluth and Gary Goldman on Fox Animation Sci-Fi.

By Mike Lyons

Science fiction and animation seem like such a perfect pair, one has to wonder why they've never gotten together before. The filmmakers behind TITAN, A.E., the latest animated feature from Fox Animation Studio, which opens June 16th, hope you'll wonder no more, after seeing it.

"Up until now, most people in animation have been going for what they think is tried and true," said Gary Goldman, who co-directs TITAN, A.E. with his long-time collaborator, Don Bluth. "Story books and folk tales have been the norm. We have to live by the Golden Rule and that is, 'The man with the gold rules.' In this case, the man with the gold wanted to do science fiction. That was Bill Mechanic [President and CEO of Fox Filmed Entertainment], who is very interested in creating films that may not come from the 'Mouse House' and carve a niche for Fox Animation."

"In animation, everyone seems to follow the last success," added Bluth. "If musical comedies are working, then everyone makes one of those, instead of taking the risky position and do something that hasn't been done. That's probably the reason why we haven't seen

science fiction and animation together before."

Set in the year 3028, TITAN, A.E. begins with a battle between two forces—the Earth and the Drej, an army of shimmering, blue aliens—for dominance over the galaxy. In a surprise attack, the Drej come in with all their firepower and destroy Earth.

Out of the seven billion humans on Earth, only one million escape in ships. They go out into the galaxy and settle into drifter colonies. What many of them don't know is that at the moment Earth was destroyed, a man named Sam Tucker created a huge ship called the Titan, which has the power to create a new Earth and was jettisoned just in the nick of time. The Titan then becomes lost somewhere in the deep reaches of



Spaceship Valkyrie navigates the dangerous gas trees of the planet Sesharrim.

space.

However, hope rests on the shoulders of Tucker's son, Cale, who was one of the many humans who escaped before Earth's destruction. Fifteen years after the apocalypse, we meet Cale as a bitter teenager working as a mechanic on a "third rate asteroid." Joe Korso, who is captain of the ship, the Valkyrie, and was a friend of Cale's father, discovers him. He informs Cale that a ring he wears contains a map to the spaceship, the Titan, which miraculously appears on the young man's hand.

"It's an interesting story to tell," Bluth noted, "when you're saying that somebody has something, whether it's a map, or treasure, or kingship and it's yanked away from them. After that, how

do they deal with what's left? For me that connects with where humans are right now."

The Drej discover that this map exists and, in an attempt to prevent the human race from repopulating, try to kill Cale. The young, reluctant hero is then forced to escape with Korso, and his crew: co-pilot Akima and the aliens, first mate Preed, navigator Gune and Sith, the weapons specialist.

The Valkyrie must then try to make it to the Titan, before the Drej discover it.

When production on TITAN, A.E. began (under its original title, PLANET ICE, see sidebar, page 60), the biggest challenge was to establish a science-fiction look that didn't feel like "been there, done that." "I haven't really followed science-

Bluth and Goldman used cutting edge computer imagery to create the film's stunning ships and space vistas.







Fox opens co-directors Bluth and Goldman's sci-fi effort nationwide June 16.

**PHILIP CRUDEN, PROD. DESIGNER**

**“Within the animation community we tend to put rules out on ourselves. When you look at past films, why try and copy something when you can do something unique.”**

fiction very closely,” said Bluth. “I’ve been over in another arena. So, when it came time to do this, I just gathered the people around me who had seen the one billion science fiction films that are out there, and said, ‘You have to tell me where I go wrong.’”

This responsibility for creating the film’s look fell upon TITAN’s production designer, Philip Cruden, a self-confessed SF fanatic, who became excited about the film’s possibilities. “There are no rules for animation,” he said. “And, I think, within the animation community, we tend to put rules on ourselves and we may think, ‘Well, this isn’t animation, why should we be doing that?’ In actuality, when you look at past films, why try and copy something

when you can do something unique. Because TITAN is the first of its kind, in the Western world, we tried to do something unique with it.”

Cruden does confess, however, that he did have initial doubts about the project. “Actually,” he remembered, “when they first told me, I said to myself, ‘A science fiction cartoon? Gimme a break!’”

To keep audiences from feeling the same way, the mandate became to “think live-action,” when crafting the tone of TITAN, A.E. “The two worlds of animation and live-action have always been gazing over into each other’s backyards,” added Bluth. “Live-action has always been gazing over into our backyard and wanting to do things, like make actors fly. We’ve always

been gazing at them and saying, ‘How can we make things more realistic?’ Our triumph comes when we can make something seem so unbelievably real, that you forget that it’s drawn.”

“If you look at old and new Disney films,” said Cruden, “they generally try and find that look that fits into ‘classical’ animation. Our approach was to do this as if it was a live-action movie. So, we began watching more live-action films than we did animation. People have said that the film looks more like Anime. In fact, in many international interviews, they’ve asked ‘How much Anime did you guys watch?’ And, actually, we didn’t look at any.”

Instead, the sci-fi aficionado broke out his entire video tape collection and began his immersion into his favorite genre. In doing this, Cruden fell upon a darker, weatherworn look, for TITAN, that seemed original, and yet, vaguely familiar. “We’ve taken everything down a little,” he said. “If you look at the ALIEN movies and INDEPENDENCE DAY, you’ll see what I call ‘the Fox look,’ when it comes to sci-fi.”

Two of science fiction’s most familiar elements also fell upon Cruden. The first of these was spaceships. “There were probably 100 drawings of the Valkyrie alone,” he remembered. “Bill

Mechanic kept saying, ‘Make it a sports car.’ So, we sleeked it down.” The other genre element that required a tremendous amount of pre-production work for TITAN, A.E. were aliens. “If George Lucas wants aliens for his next STAR WARS film, I think we have an encyclopedia full of them,” laughed Cruden. “We went everywhere with the designs and everybody got involved with them. I sat down with my department designing these aliens and on top of that, we had taken on board a whole pile of artwork that came from LA [Fox Animation Studio is located in Phoenix, Arizona]. There were probably 1500 drawings of aliens.

“It got to a point where we didn’t know what was what. We got into some creatures that had eight legs, some that had mouths in their stomachs, some of it just got to the point where it was too weird for the audience to relate to it. When we were at that point, we realized that we could start weeding things out.”

Differentiating TITAN, A.E. from other science fiction films meant that the main character, Cale, couldn’t just be another “Skywalker-wanna-be.” “There’s something intriguing about a character who’s learning and doesn’t have all the information,” said Len Simon, who not only served as the character’s supervising animator, but also oversaw all of the animators working on the film. “Everything that Cale knows is still very juvenile. When he starts learning about his father, everything begins to unfold. His personality begins to develop and he begins to see things in a different light.”

Helping Simon out in this department was the character’s voice, Matt Damon. “I studied a lot of his films,” remembered Simon. “I was able to pick up on his mannerisms and expressions.” In addition to Damon,

The Drej begin their climactic attack on Cale, Akima and Korso on the temple ruins of the planet Sesharrim.





# ANIME TITANS

## DON BLUTH & GARY GOLDMAN

*The Disney rebels on  
blazing new 'toon trails.*

By Mike Lyons

"I've done 11 feature films," animation veteran Don Bluth recently recalled, adding with a laugh, "and I didn't think I'd ever make it past two or three."

He did indeed make it well past those single digits and today, Bluth and longtime partner, Gary Goldman find themselves at the helm of one of the summer's hottest films and what



Bluth's early foray into science fiction, the astronaut of *SPACE ACE*, video-game animation circa 1983.

could be another breakthrough for animation, *TITAN*, A.E.

This wasn't always the case for Bluth and Goldman, however, in fact, they were once the "bad boys" of animation. In 1981, after becoming part of a young group of artists at the Disney studio who were to herald in a new age of animation, Bluth and Goldman (along with animator John Pomeroy, who

has since returned to Disney) led a walk-out of 11 animators.

"At the time we were there, things just weren't getting better," remembered Goldman. "We were in love with all of these beautifully made movies like *PINOCCHIO*, *BAMBI*, *101 DALMATIANS* and the movies we were working on, *ROBIN HOOD*, *THE RESCUERS* and *PETE'S DRAGON*, seemed like the same old thing to us. We just got extremely upset. So, we said, 'Maybe if we go out and challenge them, it'll get better here.' That was pretty arrogant of us to think that. But, we thought, 'If we can't change things from in here, then we've got to go outside to change it, otherwise animation is going to die.'"

Change for Bluth and Goldman came very slowly at first. While working at Disney, Bluth, and a few other animators, produced a 25 minute featurette entitled *BANJO, THE WOODPILE CAT* (1979). The film was made during nights and weekends in Bluth's garage, over a five-year period. *BANJO* wasn't screened theatrically, but instead was purchased and televised by ABC. However, it did help Bluth and Goldman score the rights to establish their own independent production company.

"I remember when we started that business," said Goldman, "and we went to a lawyer,



Bluth poses with the characters of *DRAGON'S LAIR*, an early foray into video-gaming which the duo hope to find a backer to turn into a feature one day.

to make it formal. The lawyer told us, 'Are you guys aware that most marriages don't last five years? What makes you think your relationship is going to last any longer?'"

Well, it did last and the two were eventually able to produce their first full-length feature, 1982's *THE SECRET OF NIMH*. Based on the book, *Mrs. Frisby and the Rats of Nimh*, the film proved to be an impressive debut, and caught the attention of critics and animation buffs, but failed to ignite the box-office.

"My biggest disappointment was when *SECRET OF NIMH* only made \$13 million," Goldman admitted. "We had given two years of our lives, a hundred and ten hours a week. We were thrilled with the results, but it just didn't make any money. We didn't know if we were even going to stay in business after that. Today, you could give me the biggest success in the world and I don't know if I'd feel it as much as I would have if we had gotten that success during *THE SECRET OF NIMH*."

Bluth and Goldman then took animation in another direction, as they became the first animators to capitalize on the video game success of the eighties. Their studio produced

animation for *DRAGON'S LAIR*, the world's first animated video game (the animated information was stored on laser disks inside each machine). A tremendous hit out of the gate, *DRAGON'S LAIR* still holds a cult fascination today.

"Someday, before I retire, I would love to do *DRAGON'S LAIR* as a feature," Goldman said. "It's amazing, because there are shrines to it everywhere on the Internet. So, I think that there would be an audience, because the kids who first played it now have kids of their own. If there was a *DRAGON'S LAIR* feature, they'd love to show their kids what they got so excited about as teenagers."

Several years after *DRAGON'S LAIR*, Bluth and Goldman would join forces with Steven Spielberg, for 1986's wildly successful *AN AMERICAN TAIL*, one of the few non-Disney animated films that re-ignited interest in the medium.

For production on their next Spielberg co-venture, *THE LAND BEFORE TIME*, Bluth and Goldman relocated, joined forces with businessman Morris Sullivan, moved their operation to Ireland and formed Sullivan-Bluth studio. *LAND BEFORE TIME* was another hit for the duo, but, unfortunately, their



next two features, ALL DOGS GO TO HEAVEN and ROCK-A-DOODLE, wouldn't fair as well.

It was around this time that Sullivan-Bluth began experiencing financial difficulties and, at one point, were forced to lay off 500 employees. In addition, their next two films, A TROLL IN CENTRAL PARK and THE PEBBLE AND THE PENGUIN barely received a theatrical release.

The last feature that Bluth and Goldman worked on before coming to Fox was Warner Bros.' THUMBELINA (1994). While not a box-office failure, it was a slight disappointment, in a long series of disappointments for Bluth and Goldman, which is why 1997's ANASTASIA was billed as a comeback of sorts for the two filmmakers, by the time they reached Fox Animation.

"ANASTASIA was, I think, just a little too young," admitted Bluth, "and still over in the 'wanna-be' area. So, with that, we learned a few lessons, we said that we needed to find a harder edge, which is what we're trying to discover with TITAN."

With TITAN, A.E., Bluth and Goldman have completed their 11th film together, continuing what seems to be a very "yin and yang" working relationship that began in 1971. Said Bluth, "I'm usually up in the first part, the genesis of a picture. I will work out story points and turn that over to Gary. When he sees it, he knows where it's supposed to go. Gary jokingly says that our relationship is like a marriage, but we just don't know what it all means." □

Bluth and Goldman making debut on THE SECRET OF NIMH, with John Pomeroy (r), who returned to Disney.



## DON BLUTH, CO-DIRECTOR

**"An animated film is like a giant jigsaw puzzle. There are millions of pieces and 300 people putting them together. When the time comes to assemble it, if they don't fit, you've got trouble."**



In the Drej mothership prison, Cale (Matt Damon) and the beautiful pilot Akima (Drew Barrymore) plan a future together, animation to hook a teen audience.

the cast of TITAN, A.E. includes Drew Barrymore as Akima and Bill Pullman as Korso. "Bill Pullman has always played the super-nice guy," said Goldman. "In this film, he's a very hard core character. He really pulled it off."

For the aliens, John Leguizamo plays Gune, Janeane Garofalo is Sith and Nathan Lane is Preed. Lane is no stranger to animated voices, having stolen the show in Disney's LION KING, as Timon. Simon notes that the actor seems poised to do the same again with Preed. "He gave a different feel to the character. When we first designed him, he was this monstrous looking lizard, but then with Nathan's thespian-type voice, it gave it a whole different spin. You suddenly don't know what angle he's coming from and you can't figure him out."

For Simon, who also supervised the other animators working on the film, animating the strange anatomy of these aliens proved a challenge for he and his crew. "We wanted to get away from the stereotypical alien," noted Simon. "Gune is the comic relief, there was a lot of 'meat' for the animators with

him. Sith, on the other hand, was the opposite, because she had all these extra knee joints and you had to do a lot more thinking as to how to operate this character, because there was nothing else to compare it to."

Still, the animator notes that, he and his crew, had to remain true to the versatility of their craft. "Many times we have to act something out to a stop watch. You can't just trace from live-action. You have to study it, analyze it and caricature it. Initially, whatever life experience you have you'll put into the character. From that, you can cast accordingly.

"For example, someone who's very hardened, I would not give a soft character, because you have to do something that suits your personality. We do the same thing actors do, and one thing that helps me with that is music. For whatever character I'm working on I'll play a different kind of music. If it's a villain, I listen to a lot of hard rock. For Cale, I listened to middle of the road music, like soft rock."

Despite the fact that TITAN, A.E. calls upon many of the same elements found in veteran

Bluth and Goldman's other films, such as AN AMERICAN TAIL and ANASTASIA, expect a few envelope-pushing developments. It's not the usual "Don and Gary film," as Goldman called it. There are plot twists, instead of musical showstoppers, bizarre aliens in place of cuddly sidekicks and washed-out colors where a brighter palette usually is.

"This is a grungier animated film than you've ever seen," said Simon. "HEAVY METAL tried something like this in the early eighties, but when you looked at it, it was still a cartoon. [TITAN, A.E.] is a classical feature and yet it feels very modern. It doesn't feel like we were doing the same old formula and we've just changed the characters around. It looks and feels very different than any animated film you've seen."

As a science fiction film, the visual effects, especially those crafted in the 3-D realm of computer generated imagery (CGI), were integral to TITAN, A.E.

You think you have a tough job? Consider what Charlie Breakiron, 3-D lead animator for Fox Animation's new film TITAN, A.E., had to accomplish. "The first job the directors threw at me was to blow-up the world," he laughed.

"The difficulty was in not making the CGI so real that it overshadows the hand drawn animation," said Gary Goldman, who co-directs the film with Don Bluth. "All of the CGI was hand-painted by the background department. This way everything has a very rustic look. We're essentially trying to do what STAR WARS did, in that, all of the equipment looks used."

"We wanted everything to have that subtle, soft, painterly effect," said Breakiron. "Some of that required 'motion-blur.' When you apply 'motion-blur' to anything, you soften the edges a little bit."

Co-director Bluth added that this required that the traditional animators and 3-D animators work closer than ever before, in order to have consistency throughout the film. "An animated film is like a giant jigsaw puzzle. There are millions of pieces and there are three hundred people putting them all together. When it comes time to



# TITAN A.E.

## DEVELOPMENT HELL ON PLANET ICE

*How Bluth and Goldman rescued a troubled ship.*

By Eric Lurio

If things had gone as planned, Don Bluth wouldn't be in this issue. If things had gone as originally planned, the film now known as TITAN, A.E. would already be in your video collection and Mike Lyons would be writing a fascinating article on Bluth's version of DRACULA for sometime this fall. But things almost never go as planned and Murphy's Law applies to everybody...it's best to go back to the beginning.

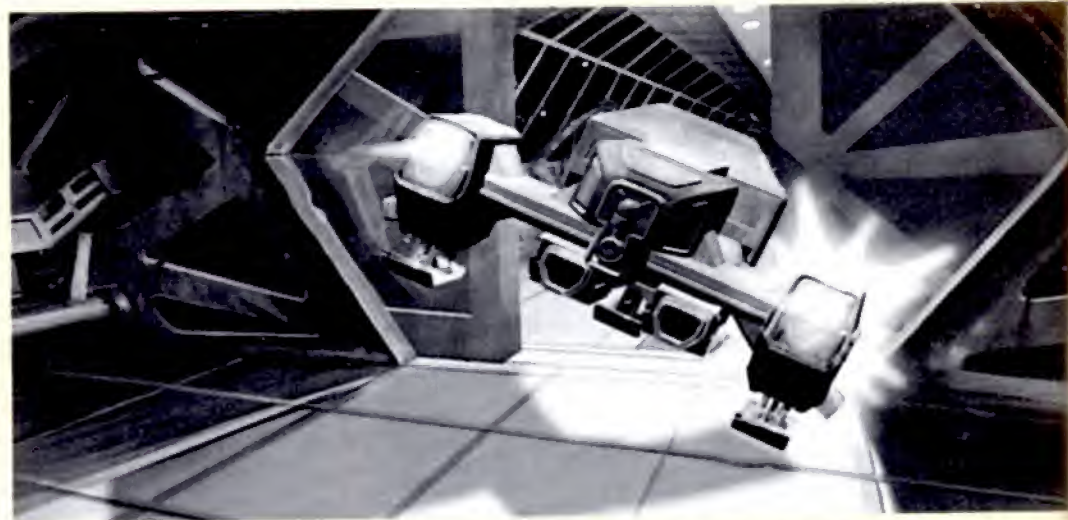
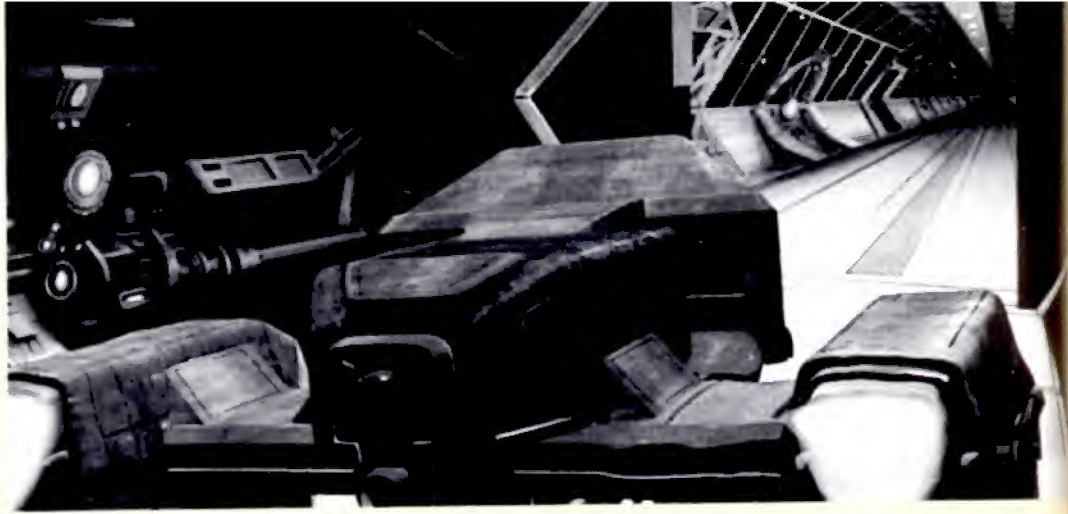
That Rupert Murdoch's Newscorp conglomerate would go after Disney on its home turf wasn't something you needed a crystal ball to discern. The Fox Television network's animated programming had been very profitable. THE SIMPSONS had been a hit since before day one, and the afternoon kid's block was consistently first in the ratings. Not only that, but Bill Kroyer's fully animated FERGULLY: THE LAST RAINFOREST was a minor hit theatrically and was making a killing on video.

So in 1994, Fox Films president Bill Mechanic announced that the company was founding an animation studio on its own. It was to be headed by Don Bluth and Gary Goldman, who had just been summarily kicked out of their Dublin digs, and lo-

cated in Phoenix, Arizona where there were tax breaks galore.

The new studio would follow a predictable pattern: it started with something simple, the first season of a TV show for PBS called TALES FROM THE BOOK OF VIRTUES. Then while the animation team was getting its act together with that, work began on a Disney-esque first feature directed by Bluth and Goldman themselves, this was, of course, ANASTASIA, a film that showed that Fox could do Disney as well as Disney. Once equality was proven, they would then proceed to blow everyone away with something totally new.

This ambitious project was provisionally called PLANET ICE. Since Bluth and Goldman



Applying their computer graphics and gaming knowhow to create dizzying chase sequences as Cale and Akima attempt to escape the alien Drej.

were working on ANASTASIA, it was decided to hire as a director people at Fox knew relatively well and who had a different slant on things, Art Vitello.

Vitello had a long and varied career in animation. He began as an animator for DePatie-Freleng back in the '70s before going to Industrial Light and Magic to do the special effects on Tobe Hooper's POLTERGEIST. Following that he helped start Disney's TV division as producer and director for GUMMI BEARS. Following that he worked for Dic for a while before joining the re-revived Warner Bros animation studio where he did TINY TOON ADVENTURES and TAZ-MAINIA. These were broadcast on the Fox TV afternoon kid's

block, as was his next project, THE TICK.

THE TICK, produced by Gratz animation and based on Ben Edlund's comic books, was a crossover hit and Fox made a ton of money. In 1996 Vitello went to Phoenix. But there were problems. First off there's the story. Writers came and went. Ben Edlund, who did a draft of the script, claims to be the tenth person to have worked on it. Bob Tszudiker and Noni White, who worked on ANASTASIA and later Disney's TARZAN had a go, as did Randall (SPEED 2) McCormick.

As one disgruntled artist complained, "This is one of the most ill-fated projects I've ever worked on." One of the reasons was, that as development of PLANET ICE progressed, the more complex it became and the technology just wasn't up to the task.

"The plan, as of August [1997], was for traditional animators to animate keys, and to have the computer guys duplicate them, as one of the senior staff members had some experience with that technique on WB's MARVIN MARTIAN IN THE 3RD DIMENSION. The reason they wanted to do it CG was because they have several highly detailed characters that are almost impossible to animate by hand-drawing them."

The technique is known as

Bluth made Akima a sci-fi heroine in the Sigourney Weaver action tradition. He and Goldman took over the film's directing reigns from Art Vitello (THE TICK).





"line capture" and has since been figured out, but as another source explained: "the director for close to a year now [as of Jan. 1998] has been trying to make a completely CGI movie in one form or another. At first it was to be CGI with line-capture (as in *MARVIN THE MARTIAN 3-D*), but then he started to get more involved in complete 3-D modeling on everything. Despite everyone telling him (or warning him) that the technology wasn't ready and VIFX [Blue Sky/VIFX was bought by Fox earlier in the year] was up to it. And, in addition, he was told even if 3-D CGI was possible he would still need to shoot live-action. This was way over his head, unfortunately."

So Vitello had VIFX do a test. "A test was ordered for *PLANET ICE* from VIFX, and people on it were working around the clock to produce this test. Three weeks ago, [November, '97] the people at VIFX were told that they weren't doing the film..." Rumors flew across the Internet that *PLANET ICE* was dead.

But at about the same time, Fox had a major exhibit on *PLANET ICE* at the 1998 World Animation Celebration, and at Toy Fair the previous week, the cast had been announced. It seemed from the outside that Phoenix was in a state of chaos.

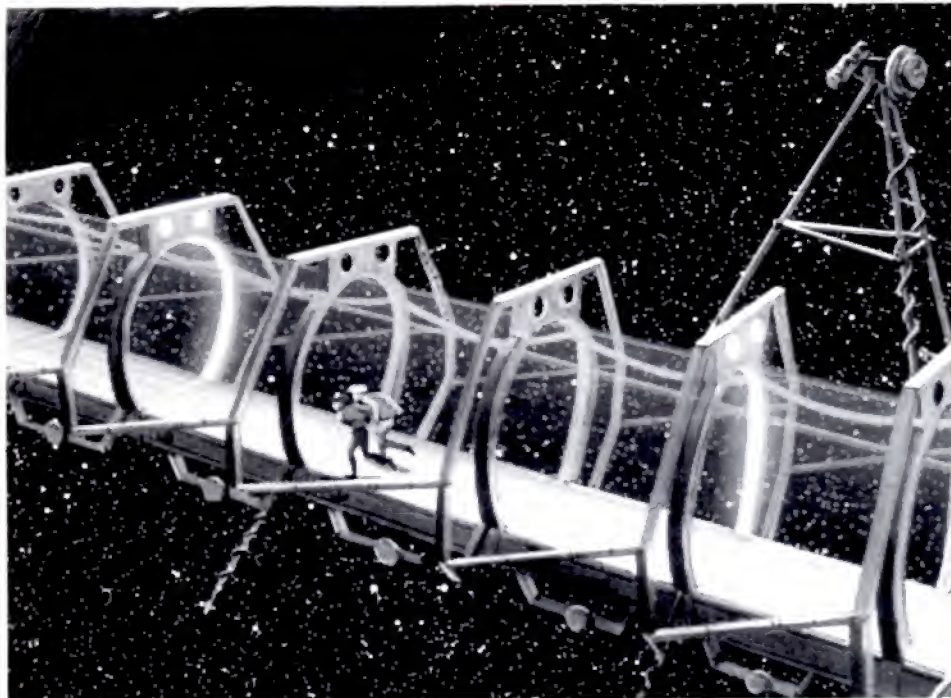
This was confirmed when it was announced Vitello was out and he'd been replaced by Blue Sky/VIFX's Henry Anderson and Chris Wedge. This situation didn't last all that long, and within a month or so, Anderson and Wedge were out. Nobody was directing *PI* and it looked like the project was at least in a coma if not completely dead.

But what died was Don Bluth's *DRACULA*. Bluth and Goldman were given *PLANET ICE*, according to what they term "the golden rule," and told to save the project. So the vampire was put on the shelf and the staff was put to work on an emergency direct-to-video project called *BARTOK THE MAGNIFICENT*, while something was worked out.

Meanwhile, the people at Fox had a contest at their website on what to call the ship. The winner was "The Titan..." □

## PHILLIP CRUDEN, PROD. DESIGNER

**"Don and I both agree that animation has always been part of the children's bedroom. These days, the audience has become so sophisticated, animation has to grow with the times."**



Cale and Akima attempt to infiltrate the Drej empire. Prior to release, Fox Animation laid-off 350 workers at Bluth's Phoenix-based studio to cut costs.

assemble them, if they don't fit, then you've got a problem."

"Two-D cel animation was scanned into [the computer] system," added Breakiron. "So, there was a direct interaction with 2-D and 3-D, which made for a seamless look."

For Breakiron, his pieces of the puzzle amounted to 65%, which represents how much of the film was computer generated. Spaceships, backgrounds and that pesky task of destroying the world added up to a lot of screen time.

To accomplish the end of the world, Breakiron had to not only call upon technology, but science as well. "I had to break it all down into 3-D elements," he said. "To break the world apart, we had to place the texture on a sphere, break it apart on tectonic plates and then it had to have a look of realism and a painterly effect."

Breakiron also had to create the film's villains, the alien Drej army. "They're pure energy," he said. "We had to use several different types of effects, all within 3-D, in order to get that translucent and energy-like feel. They moved with a little weight, as we figured that it would be a lit-

tle cumbersome for pure energy to move about. They don't freefloat, they're clunky."

One of Breakiron's most challenging effects in the film involves a rainstorm of "iceteroids" that terrorize the hero Cale and the crew of the *Valkyrie*. "To get that look, we were dealing with light refraction and transparency," stated Breakiron. "There were also a lot of reflections of the ships, within the 'iceteroids.' We had to make it look like it was believable, while keeping it simple on the technical side."

To help heighten the reality of such scenes, Breakiron said that he tries to conceptualize a sequence as early as possible in the production process. "When you're given the drawings, you're automatically going through and trying to figure out how you can make it work in the given amount of time and with the given amount of resources. You begin to visualize the sequence as soon as you see it on paper, then you go to the computer."

Such work habits only prove that computers are truly rooted in the tradition of filmmaking and animation. The realm of

CGI is much more than just pressing buttons and clicking a mouse. "I instruct 3-D animation as well," noted Breakiron, "and the question that comes up all the time in class always is 'Is 3-D taking over 2-D?' The answer is 'No, it is not.' There are several 3-D movies that are out there that have their own look and feel. That doesn't mean it's necessarily going to take over the 2-D side. You have to have skills as an animator before you go to a computer."

Breakiron, who got into computer animation during its nascent days, says that it's been amazing to be working in an industry that shifts and changes with each passing day. "It's actually not working, it's playing," he said. "This is the best thing that an artist could ask for to not only be able to do the work, but to also have the camaraderie and the satisfaction of knowing that you've completed something together. It's bliss."

Cruden hopes that *TITAN, A.E.*, while telling a science-fiction story, will also do more to break animation stereotypes. "When Don and I would talk, we would both agree that animation has always been part of the children's bedroom. These days, the audience has become so sophisticated, because of that, animation has to grow with the times."

Unfortunately, growing with these times sometimes means drastic administrative decisions, which is exactly what happened this past February at Fox Animation. In a surprising, cost-cutting move, Fox laid-off 320 employees at the Phoenix-based studio.

The studio will still handle art direction, character design, storyboarding and animation, with later-stage animation farmed out to independent contractors. Despite such devastating news, many in and outside are ready to root for *TITAN, A.E.* Cruden, speaking before the lay-offs were announced, added, "I believe that *TITAN* is the type of film that will come out and cause people to say, 'Wow, you can do that with animation!' I think it's just a start. We're at a point where animation can go exploring." □



# GODZILLA 2000

By Mike Woods

Though undoubtedly the most important Toho Godzilla film since *GODZILLA VERSUS BIOLANTE* resurrected the series a decade earlier, this latest entry will be hard for U.S. audiences to appreciate when Columbia opens it nationwide August 11. In 1996's *GODZILLA VERSUS DESTROYAH*, Toho had somewhat surprisingly decided to kill off their biggest star, seemingly leaving the path clear for Hollywood (in the shape of Columbia-TriStar and filmmakers Dean Devlin and Roland Emmerich) to reap the riches from the seeds sown for so long by the Japanese.

But Toho were clearly shrewder judges than many at the time thought and the failure of Columbia-TriStar's version put Toho in a eminently stronger position than they had ever been in before, with not only the eyes of the Japanese, but of the entire world, waiting to see the real Godzilla return.

What's more, Toho might have sent Godzilla off up the stairway to monster heaven but in his son—who first appeared as Baby Godzilla in *GODZILLA VS. MECHA GODZILLA* back in 1991, and had been maturing in

*The original big green monster strives for a comeback—how quaint.*



**GODZILLA 2000: MILLENNIUM**, actually the son of Godzilla (done first in 1969), opens August 11. Below: Fighting Orga, one of his least-inspired adversaries.



each film since—they had a replacement waiting to follow in his father's footsteps and trample the buildings of Tokyo once more.

*GODZILLA 2000: MILLENNIUM* therefore marks Godzilla Jr.'s first appearance in fully grown form (although at 55 meters high, he is of a comparable size to the Godzilla of the earlier films, he is only half the size of the creature that was featured in the '90s series). Special-effects director Kenji Suzuki, who cut his teeth on numerous Toho films before taking charge on last year's *MOTHRA 3*, has constructed a creature with a distinct identity of his own—the larger, sharper dorsal fins are perhaps the most instantly noticeable change in suit design—but one clearly of Godzilla lineage, un-

like Devlin and Emmerich's which bore little or no resemblance to Toho's beast.

If the success of *GODZILLA 2000: MILLENNIUM* can be measured purely on the title character itself (and considering this is essentially a relaunch, the first of what will undoubtedly be an entire series of films that will feature the new Godzilla), then it scores a resounding hit. Unfortunately, many of the other aspects of the film fail to live up to the standards of the design, notably the script, direction, music and many of the other effects.

The story is centered around the discovery of a meteorite which, when attempts are made to raise it to the surface of the sea, ascends on its own, and then flies off heading for a nuclear power plant where Godzilla, after destroying an entire city, has appeared. A heat-wave blast from Godzilla reveals the rock is actually a UFO which then heads for Tokyo where it hijacks the central computer network. When a rejuvenated Godzilla reappears the UFO uses what is termed his "Organizer-G1" to transform into a new giant life form Orga, which then engages in a final battle with Godzilla.

What the film lacks is suspense and a sense of danger, and is further diminished by the strictly one-dimensional characters that populate the film; the cast (including Godzilla veter-

an Takeshiro Murata as the leader of the Godzilla Prediction Network) may be good but they are given precious little to work with.

When one recalls the grandeur Akira Ifukube's scores lent to the best Toho productions, the music here sounds doubly disappointing; sometimes merely ineffective but on occasion seeming totally ill-suited. It is not until the strains of Ifukube's theme are heard as Godzilla heads for the final showdown that any true sense of awe and excitement is allowed to build up.

The special-effects are variable. While the new Godzilla will make a worthy addition to a series of vinyl toys (that are as much a part of Godzilla culture as the film themselves), his foe, Orga is a disappointingly unmemorable creation, and unlikely to be a recurring feature a la King Ghidorah, Mothra et al.

Director Takao Okawara (responsible for three out of the last five Godzilla movies) appears to have been on auto pilot, failing to rouse much excitement nor showing any interest in expanding the limits of the genre in any way. Earlier, *GAMERA 3* adventurously began to explore new avenues and took the "kaiju eiga" to a new level of maturity and sophistication. In comparison, *GODZILLA 2000 MILLENNIUM* remains a

distinctly old-fashioned monster movie. Not that this is strictly a bad thing. There is certainly a place for the traditional monster movie, and Toho with their Godzilla films have proved this time and time again over the past 45 years. But this is simply not one of the better ones.

The anamorphic cinematography gives rise to some remarkably rich imagery—misty night shots of Godzilla lit by the fires of the burning debris, some stunning underwater shots—and there are some scattered effective moments, especially memorable being the instance of Godzilla shattering a windscreen with his roar. Most crucially though, it successfully introduces a new star to usher in what Toho are calling "the new Godzilla century," and leaves plenty of room for improvement. □

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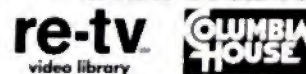
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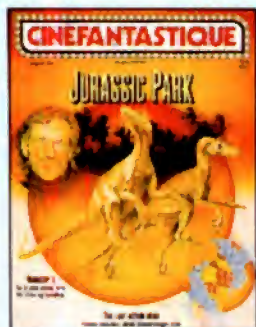
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**Volume 25 Number 2**  
**THE STAND** cover  
Filming Stephen King's THE STAND, plus a look inside the King horror empire. This issue also features BABYLON 5. **\$8.00**



**Volume 22 Number 6**  
Behind-the-scenes of ALIEN 3. We reveal how plagued the latest installment of the saga was. Also HELLRAISER III: HELL ON EARTH, and PETER PAN. **\$8.00**



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Issue-length stories on the making of both STAR TREK II: THE WRATH OF KHAN and an in-depth look at BLADE RUNNER's dazzling design and effects work. **\$14.00**



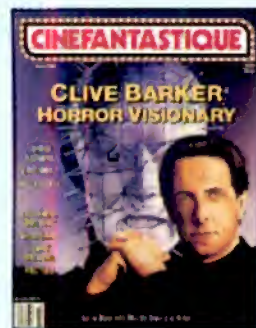
**Volume 14 Number 4/5**  
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**BRAM STOKER'S DRACULA**, and a look at Francis Ford Coppola's horror roots. Also Disney's ALADDIN, and BODY SNATCHERS. **\$8.00**



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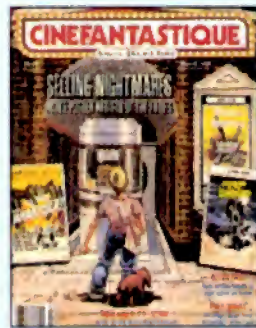
**Volume 26 Number 3**  
Our Clive Barker issue featuring an interview with the horror visionary himself, plus a look at his films. Also, a look at Showtime's revival of OUTER LIMITS. **\$8.00**



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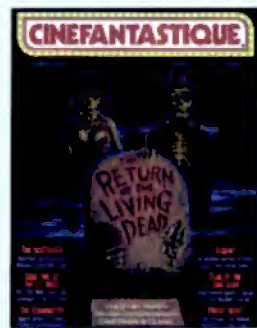
**Volume 10 Number 1**  
In-depth interview with director John Carpenter, who discusses his career and films, plus an exclusive look at his teenage career as a publisher. **\$10.00**



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**DICK TRACY** cover  
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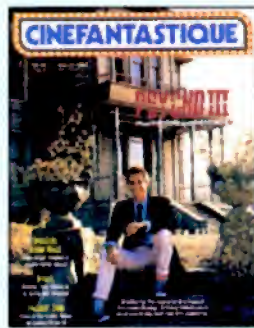
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